

The page features two thick, dark red wavy lines that curve across the top and middle sections. On the left side, there is a large, light gray outline of a five-pointed star.

**Federation Business School  
Federation University Australia**

**Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia:  
An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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# STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

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## **PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO THIS THESIS**

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Yousuf, M., & Backer, E. (2015a). A Content Analysis of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel Research. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 25 (2015), 1–10.  
**(ABDC ranking- B) (Quantitative research)**

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**(This paper was received competitive CAUTHE PhD Bursary Award-2015).**

(Synopsis of the above publications is provided in Appendix-6 of this document.)

# ABSTRACT

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel is a significant form of travel in terms of global travel numbers. However, research on VFR travel is small relative to its size. In particular, research regarding the role of hosts of VFR travellers in shaping their trips including travel decisions and activities has been examined by few researchers. No previous research explored the differences in hosting between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents despite VFR travel being commonly associated with migration in existing literature. Before this research, the differences between hosting friends and relatives had been neglected, resulting in VFR hosts being treated as one homogenous group. Previous research also failed to empirically test the influence of destination on the hosting of VFRs. Thus, this is the first study examining the hosting of VFRs through combining how migration, relationship types, and destination types, impact VFR travel experiences for hosts.

Given that VFR travel is a significant component of Australia's visitor numbers, and that it comprises a large immigrant population, Australia is a suitable setting for this study. Considering the multi-dimensional elements in the study, the "VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model" was used as the conceptual model for this study. Quantitative research was conducted nationally with 331 residents, collected through an online survey, assessing the differences and similarities in hosting behaviours. Qualitative research was undertaken through in-depth interviews with 34 local residents in three contrasting destinations in Victoria understanding the social interactions between VFR hosts and their visiting friends/relatives. Significant differences were found between immigrants and non-immigrants regarding attracting VFRs and hosting experiences. Differences were also noted between hosting friends versus hosting relatives, and it was also determined that the destination types impact VFR hosting. Such findings have provided valuable insights regarding the economic and social benefits of promoting local marketing campaign targeting local residents.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Title
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
COB	Country of Birth
CVFR	Commercial VFR
DMO	Destination Marketing Organisation
EVFR	Exploitative VFR
LGA	Local Government Area
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
NOV	Net Overseas Migration
POV	Purpose of Visit
PVFR	Pure VFR
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VFs	Visiting Friends
VRs	Visiting Relatives



# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces the research project and provides the rationale for this research regarding Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel. The chapter commences by discussing the background of the research (Section 1.2) that clarifies the research topic, followed by outlining the research settings (Section 1.3) where the research was conducted, and research approach showing how the research was conducted (Section 1.4). Key definitions are then provided (section 1.5), followed by presenting the overarching aim and objectives that directed the research (Section 1.6). The chapter concludes by highlighting the key points regarding the significance of the research (Section 1.7) and by outlining the structure of the thesis (Section 1.8) before the chapter conclusion (Section 1.9).

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH**

VFR travel is a major component of tourism, comprising almost half the domestic visitor market in Australia (Backer, 2012a, 2015) and is the oldest form of travel (Backer, 2011a). Despite this, research in the area is only new, commencing in 1990 (Backer, 2007, 2012a; Backer & Hay, 2014; Jackson, 1990; Morrison & O’Leary, 1995). Most research within the VFR travel literature has focused on the demand side through understanding the volume, economic value and marketing implications of VFR travellers (Griffin, 2013a). However, research on the supply side is limited, particularly on the influential role of the hosts that sets VFR travel apart from other form of travel (Backer, 2007; Griffin, 2013a, 2013b; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young, Corsun, & Baloglu, 2007).

The personal relationship between VFR travellers with their hosts is central to VFR travel and its impact on tourism (Backer, 2010a; Riley & Love, 2000). Research has demonstrated

the influence of VFR travel hosts in the travel “decision-making and information search process” (Meis, Joyal, & Trites, 1995), revealing that VFR travellers are inclined to rely heavily on the advice from their hosts rather than promotional materials (Young et al., 2007). Since hosts tend to recommend and visit the same places and activities that they are familiar with (Young et al., 2007), tourism operators and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) could influence VFR travellers by promoting local attractions and activities to the local hosts (Backer, 2011a; Morrison & O’Leary, 1995).

Through the role of hosting, local residents often incur incremental expenses and activities that otherwise might not happen (Backer, 2010b; McKercher, 1995). As such, DMOs could engage residents as ambassadors; disseminating information to potential visitors (Backer, 2008). However, the extent and nature of the multifaceted role of VFR hosts varies according to the local residents’ familiarity and perception regarding local travel activities, attractions, and the experience of hosting VFR travellers (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Slater, 2002; Young et al., 2007). Therefore, understanding the different attributes of local hosts is essential to understanding the extent and nature of VFR hosts’ role in influencing VFR travellers’ travel decisions and activities (Backer, 2008; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). Thus, this research focuses on three attributes of VFR hosts (migration; relationship; destination) that link with the key areas of VFR travel identified through the existing literature.

Migration is closely linked with VFR travel as it is considered as a key determinant of the flow of VFR travel worldwide (Griffin, 2013a; Dwyer, Seetaram, Forsyth, & King, 2014). Immigrants display "a sense of belonging to or identifying with a way of life that has been left behind" (King, 1994, p. 174). However, the intensity and practices of those relationships vary in different cultures and also change over time (Stodolska, 2000; Tal &

Handy, 2010; Ying-xue, Bing, Lin-bo, & Zhi, 2013). As personal relationships (friends and relatives) bind VFR hosts and travellers, the role that VFR hosts may have can vary based on the country of birth and year of immigration (Tal & Handy, 2010; Ying-xue et al., 2013). Therefore, investigating the role of immigrant communities as VFR hosts would further understanding of VFR travel (Backer, 2012a; Griffin, 2013a).

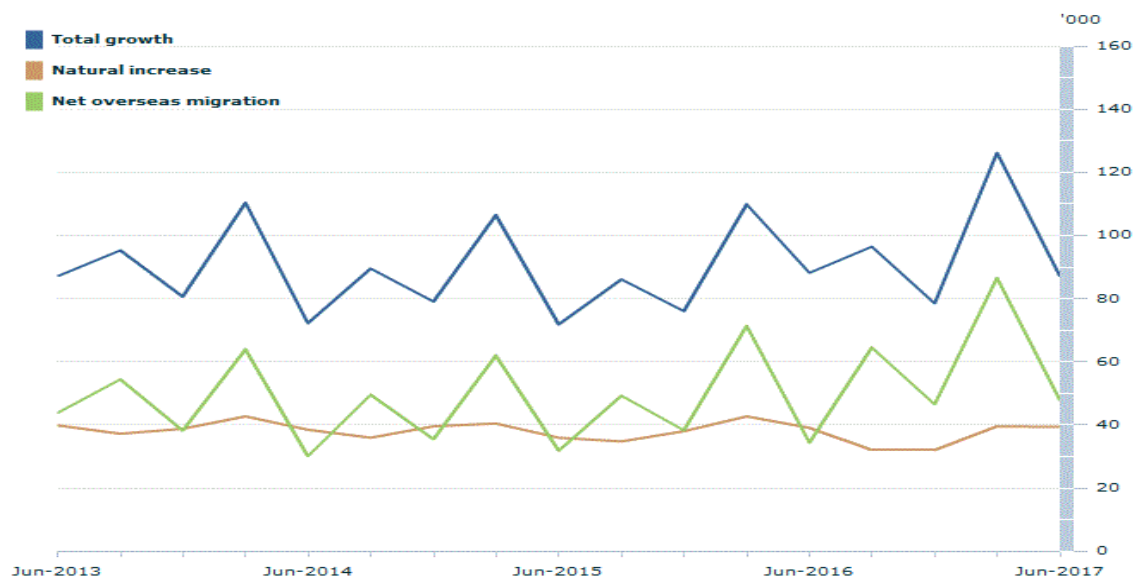
Research on immigrant hosts is still in the primary stage and requires further research (Backer, 2008; Boyne, Carswell, & Hall, 2002; Griffin, 2013a). In addition, the activities undertaken by hosts and visiting relatives (VRs) may differ to that of hosts of visiting friends (VFs) (Backer, 2010c; Backer, Leisch, & Dolnicar, 2017; King, 1996; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007). Therefore, the type of relationship between VFR hosts and travellers could be an important motivational factor that can influence the role of host in VFR travel.

Previous research has demonstrated that the attractiveness of destinations influences the length of stay of VFR travellers (Backer, 2008). However, knowledge of the possible effect of destination attractiveness is limited and requires further examination in different settings (such as regional versus metropolitan cities). Moreover, as the experience of VFR travel differs between different groups of local residents, such as new residents, temporary residents, and international students (Lee & King, 2016; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007), the experience of hosting VFR travellers may differ between immigrants and non-immigrants (Griffin, 2015, 2017; Schänzel, Brocx, & Sadaraka, 2014). The experience of hosting may also be influenced by the destination attractiveness and from hosting friends versus relatives, which is still unknown. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of experience of hosting VFRs from the hosts' perspective and its association with migration, the nature of the relationship (friends and relatives) and destination attractiveness could generate valuable insights for academics and practitioners.

### 1.3 RESEARCH SETTING: AUSTRALIA

The substantial size of VFR travel in Australia (Backer, 2012a, 2015) and the long history of migration (Dwyer et al., 2014) makes Australia an appropriate setting for this study. As of June 2017, the population of Australia was reported as being 24.6 million (ABS, 2017). This is an increase of 388,100 people from the previous year. The Australian population has been growing by almost 2% per annum and the net overseas migration (NOM) to Australia contributes 63.2% to this growth (ABS, 2017). The following figure (Figure 1.1) shows the trend of the contribution made by immigrants in comparison to natural increases (numbers of newborn) to the overall population of Australia over the past five years. As illustrated in Figure 1.1 that in June 2017, the NOM was 27.1% (245,400 people), which was an increase of 52,400 people on previous year June 2016 (193,000 people). In contrast, the natural increase contributed only 7.5% to the population increase.

**Figure 1.1: Population Growth in Australia, Quarterly**



*Source: Adapted from ABS (2017)*

The level of migration is an important determinant of inbound and outbound travel in Australia, especially through VFR travel (Seetaram, 2012a, 2012b; Seetaram & Dwyer, 2009). The higher the number of immigrants to Australia, the larger the pool of friends and

relatives visitors from the immigrants' source country. Such visits may prompt leisure-focused trips involving staying with the immigrant friends and relatives during the trip. Some visitors may also come to visit to participate in different family events such as weddings, funerals and birthdays. Immigrants also add new elements to local tourism through establishing restaurant and shops and organising events connecting with their ethnicity, such as 'Chinatown', kebab shops, Indian restaurants, food and cultural festivals, which also influence domestic tourism flow. So, the changing pattern of population demographics in Australia through migration does induce the level and nature of VFR travel in Australia (Dwyer et al., 2014; Jackson, 1990).

However, the migration effect in VFR travel in terms of hosting VFR travellers is yet to be studied in Australia. As previously noted, having an understanding of the role of local resident VFR hosts may assist local tourism operators and DMOs to develop specific and appropriate marketing strategies for influencing the large numbers of VFR travellers in Australia (Backer, 2010a).

#### **1.4 DEFINITIONAL CLARIFICATION OF VFR TRAVEL AND HOSTS**

The actual size of VFR travel is best measured by aggregating VFR travellers based on both purpose of visit and accommodation choice (Backer, 2007, 2010c, 2012a). For that reason, this research has considered VFR travel based on both purpose of visit and choice of accommodation. A detailed discussion of the importance of defining VFR travel based on both purpose of visit and choice of accommodation of VFR travellers is provided in the next chapter (Section 2.3). Notably, this research adopts the term 'VFR Travel' instead of 'VFR tourism' as it acknowledges that some VFR travellers do not meet the definition of a tourist and as such it is more accurate to use the term 'travel' (Backer, 2010c, 2012a). The term 'VFR travel' is now increasingly adopted in tourism literature (e.g. Backer, 2010a,

2010b, 2012a, 2015; Capistrano, 2013; Rogerson & Hoogendoorn, 2014; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Uriely, 2010) and all authors in a recent book devoted to VFR (Backer & King, 2015) used the term ‘VFR travel’.

This study acknowledges the heterogeneity of VFR travellers based on their purpose of visit and type of accommodation use. As such, in this research ‘VFR host’ is defined as someone who has had friends and/or relatives visit them and stay at least one night in their destination. The friends/relatives may have either stayed with the hosts or in commercial accommodation (e.g. hotel, motel, apartment, caravan park). The ‘VFR Host Definitional Model’, which is presented and discussed in the next chapter (Section 2.7.1), defines the different types of VFR hosts. Moreover, for the purposes of analysis, ‘immigrant hosts’ are defined as those who have relocated to Australia from another country of origin or birth (COB). ‘Non-immigrant hosts’ are those who were born and live in Australia (Boyne et al., 2002; Huong & King, 2002).

This research will examine the key factors influencing hosts’ interactions and activities with VFR travellers. A comparative analysis will be undertaken to examine whether and to what extent VFR hosts engage in different activities with their VFR travellers based on destination, type of relationship (i.e. VF versus VR), or immigrant versus non-immigrant status.

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

Based on the background discussion, the overarching aim of this research is to study VFR travel by examining the role of VFR hosts in shaping the trips undertaken by VFR travellers. Given the aim, this study will investigate local residents influencing the role of hosts in VFR travel. The following research objectives will guide the central aim of this study:

1. To analyse the literature on VFR travel that is directly related to tourism in order to understand the themes and development within the extant literature.
2. To review the literature on hosts and guests interactions to understand the nature of interactions between VFR hosts and guests.
3. To examine the role of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts to assess whether and to what extent the influence of hosts on VFR travel differ.
4. To examine whether and to what extent the length of residency of hosts impacts upon VFR travel, and to compare and contrast whether migration impacts VFR travel.
5. To assess whether and to what extent destinations (i.e. metropolitan versus regional cities) can impact VFR travel hosting.
6. To compare and contrast the hosting of VFs and VRs in different destinations to assess whether and to what extent the characteristics, behaviours and use of local industries differ.
7. To examine the nature of the social interactions between hosts and their VFRs.

The first two research objectives examine the theoretical basis of the study within the extant literature identifying the research development and opportunities in the area of VFR travel.

The third and fourth research objectives examine the influence of migration on VFR hosting through the country of birth and span of migration (i.e. how long ago they migrated to their adopted country of residence) of VFR hosts respectively. The fifth research objective delineates the influence of destination attractiveness in the VFR hosting between regional

and metropolitan areas. Research objective six examines the relationship (i.e. friends or relatives) that VFR hosts have with their visiting travellers to determine whether the relationship types influence hosting. The final research objective of the study investigates the experience of VFR hosting.

## **1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS**

This study lies within the pragmatism paradigm. As detailed in Chapter 3 (Research Methodology and Methods), this study has employed both quantitative and qualitative research. Based on Research Objective One and Two a literature review was conducted on the existing VFR travel literature including all the available sources: journal articles, book chapters and theses.

Quantitative research was conducted among local residents in Australia through an online national survey to identify the differences in the role of VFR hosts influencing VFR travellers' trip characteristics and the resulting decision activities of VFR travellers and hosts. The findings address the issues in Research Objectives Three through to Six.

Qualitative research was conducted in order to address Research Objective Seven. In-depth telephone interviews were undertaken in three selected destinations in the state of Victoria (Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat). Victoria is located in the south-east of Australia and is the most densely populated state in Australia: 26.55/Km<sup>2</sup> (68.8/sq. mi) (ABS, 2016). Figure 1.2 locates the state Victoria in the Australian map.



**Figure 1.2: Map of Australia**

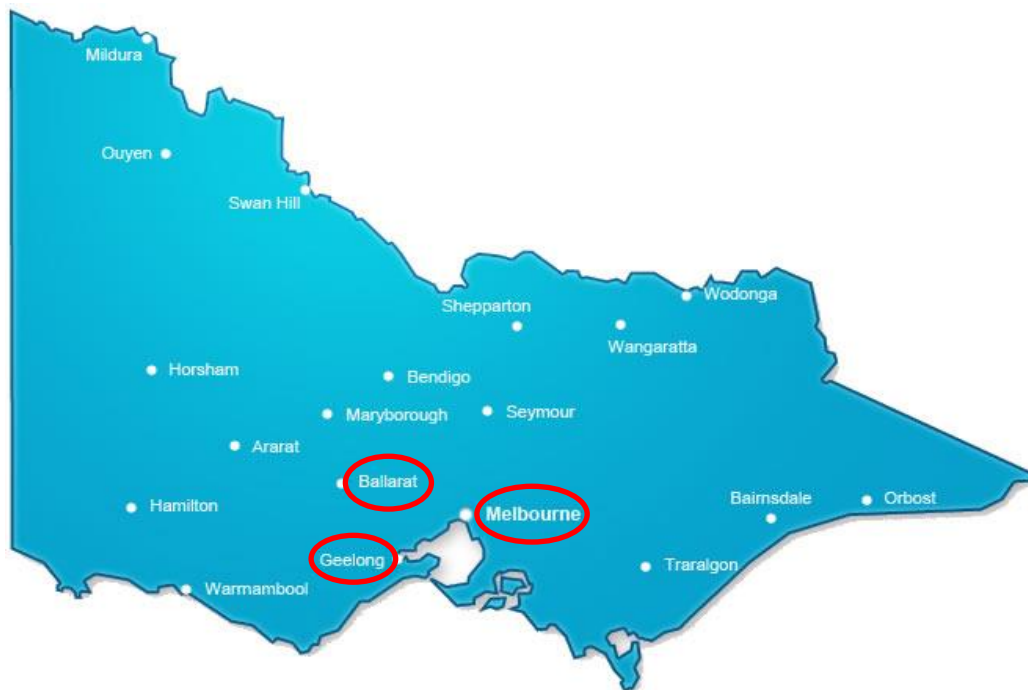


*Source: Adapted from EIGWG (2014)*

To analyse the influence of destination, three popular tourist destinations in Victoria that vary in demographic and spatial features were selected for this study. The first destination was Melbourne, which is the capital city of Victoria, representing the major metropolitan destination in this study. According to the Remoteness Areas (RA) index of the 2011 Australian Statistical Geography Standard, metropolitan areas refer to the large population centres offering greater accessibility to services and facilities (ABS, 2013). In terms of size, Melbourne is the most densely populated area in the state of Victoria: 453/km<sup>2</sup> (1,170/sq mi) (ABS, 2015) and has a population of over 4.8 million (ABS, 2018). The second selected destination, Geelong, is a regional destination that is situated 75 kilometres (km) south-east of the capital city Melbourne. Regional areas lie beyond the major capital cities that have relatively smaller population centres consist of at least 100,000 population (ABS, 2013). Geelong is the second largest densely populated area in the state of Victoria: 200.46/Km<sup>2</sup> (519.2/sq. mi) (ABS, 2011) and has a population of 177,023 (ABS, 2018). Another regional destination that was analysed in this study was Ballarat, which is situated 105 km north-

west of the state capital Melbourne and is the third most populated urban area in Victoria: 297.53/Km<sup>2</sup> (770.59/sq. mi) (ABS, 2015). Ballarat's population is 101,588 (ABS, 2018). Figure 1.3 shows the three destinations selected for the in-depth interview purpose of this research in the map of the state of Victoria.

**Figure 1.3: Map of Victoria**



*Source: Adapted from NHPA (2015)*

Moreover, as a major metropolitan destination Melbourne has both a high average travellers' expenditure and a high percentage of people born overseas (State Government of Victoria, 2013; TRA, 2014). Geelong and Ballarat represent a lower average traveller expenditure and a lower percentage of overseas-born population compared to Melbourne (State Government of Victoria, 2013; TRA, 2014). Table 1.1 represents comparative values of the three contrasting destinations examined in this study. The choice of the three selected destinations in this study represents differences in destination attractiveness between a major metropolitan area and regional areas in Australia.

**Table 1.1: Three Contrasting Destinations in Victoria**

	<b>Travellers’ Expenditure on VFR travel (2013)</b>	<b>Percentage of People Born Overseas (2011)</b>	<b>Spatial Area</b>
<b>Melbourne</b>	\$879 million	41.6%	Metropolitan
<b>Geelong</b>	\$82 million	15.9%	Regional
<b>Ballarat</b>	\$43 million	8.7%	Regional

*Source: Data extracted from State Government of Victoria (2013); TRA, (2014)*

Table 1.1 shows the expenditures made by VFR travellers in the contrasting destinations based on the purpose of visit data only and as such it is important to note that not all VFR travellers have been included in the analysis. VFR travel is typically analysed by either purpose of visit or type of accommodation (Backer, 2011a, 2012a; Jackson, 1990). However, neither statistic captures the size of VFR travel, thereby underestimating the true volume, and not fully representing the profiles and characteristics (Backer, 2012a; Jackson, 1990). As a result, VFR travel has long been misrepresented and undervalued in official tourism statistics, (e.g. Tourism Research Australia, United Nations World Tourism Organisation), around the world. This research recognises this gap of the official tourism statistics and thus adopts the comprehensive approach of defining VFR travel, which is discussed more detail in the next chapter (Section 2.3).

## **1.7 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE**

This research makes a significant contribution to both knowledge and industry. This study examines the role of VFR hosts, which has been consistently identified as a significant research gap since few researchers have considered this aspect of VFR travel (Backer, 2007; Griffin, 2013a, 2013b; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). As previously noted, this is the first study to examine the hosting of friends versus relatives, and to consider whether and to what extent immigration and destination type impact on VFR travel

activities and experiences for hosts. Therefore, the findings of this research will specifically contribute to the knowledge of VFR travel in the following ways:

- Provide understanding on the similarities and differences of immigrant versus non-immigrant VFR hosts.
- Generate insights about the interactions between travellers visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and their hosts.
- Provide knowledge about the individual differences of hosting friends versus relatives.
- Research in this area will help to understand the possible effect of destination attractiveness in VFR travel.

Such aspects concerned with VFR travel will add to scholarship greatly. In addition, this information will provide valuable insights to inform industry marketing campaigns, which could improve visitor (and host) experiences as well as boost local economies.

## **1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is presented in eight chapters adopting the traditional thesis structure. The traditional thesis format can be simple or complex. The simple traditional thesis structure typically follows a simple macro-structure of reporting including: introduction; literature review; methods, results, discussion and conclusion (Dudley-Evans, 1999; Thompson, 1999). The simple traditional format is appropriate as this study reports a single study of examining the role of VFR hosts and hence does not need a complex structure required for reporting more than one study in a thesis (Paltridge, 2002). The complex traditional thesis structure usually has separate sections on top of the typical simple structure for reporting

each of the individual studies. The structure and content of each chapter of this thesis are as follows:

- Chapter 1** Introduces the research topic regarding VFR travel and provides the rationale for the research. The first chapter also explains the overarching aim of the study examining the role of VFR hosts and the research objectives that direct the central aim of the study. The justification of the research settings in Australia is also provided. The theoretical and practical significance of the research is also briefly discussed. The definitional clarification of VFR travel and different categories of VFR hosts is also provided in the first chapter.
- Chapter 2** Summarises the existing research on VFR travel satisfying the first two objectives of the research. The chapter initially provides a general overview of VFR travel research undertaken in the last 27 years since its inception in 1990 and then discusses the various VFR travel research themes that have emerged during that period. Literature related to VFR travel's connection with migration, the relationship aspect of VFR hosts and guests and the influence of destination attractiveness in VFR travel is also presented. The research gap on VFR hosts within exiting VFR travel literature is demonstrated. The appropriateness of the VFR Whole Tourism Systems as the conceptual model of the study is also discussed in the second chapter.
- Chapter 3** Presents the methodological issues that provide the basis of the research design and methods used for data collection. The chapter describes the pragmatism paradigm that underpins the research strategy. Also discussed are the quantitative methods of data analysis that were used for research objectives three to six and qualitative methods for research objective seven. The justification of the choice of data collection sources, sample size, research design, and variables measurement and analysis are also provided in the chapter.
- Chapter 4** Presents the descriptive results of the national online survey exploring the extent and differences of VFR hosting. The chapter initially reports on the characteristics of the local residents who participated in the survey, followed

by the general findings of the survey relating to travel parties, travel decisions and activities.

- Chapter 5** Presents the inferential statistical analysis of the quantitative survey data. This chapter reports the findings of the extent and differences of hosting between immigrant and non-immigrant host groups, between hosting friends and hosting relatives and in different destinations (i.e. metropolitan versus regional).
- Chapter 6** Presents the qualitative research of the study. The characteristics of the participants who were interviewed are presented. The findings of the in-depth telephone interviews with the local residents are presented in the chapter under different themes recognised through the analysis.
- Chapter 7** Provides the discussion of the results of the analysis that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative research. The chapter presents the discussion by addressing each of the research objectives of this study. The discussion incorporates both the theoretical and empirical evidence extracted from the literature concerned VFR hosting practices.
- Chapter 8** Concludes the thesis by explaining the key findings of the study and the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. The limitations of the research and future research that could be undertaken to advance the area of hosting VFRs are also discussed.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has provided a brief background of the research and outlined the research settings. The definitional elements of VFR travel have been presented followed by outlining the overarching aim and objectives of the research. The next chapter will discuss the relevant theory and introduce the conceptual model of the study and through doing so, address research objectives one and two.

## **CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the relevant literature that provides the context for the study and accordingly satisfies Research Objectives One and Two. This chapter begins with a review of the magnitude of VFR travel research (Section 2.2) and identifies the key issues influencing the extent of VFR travel research (Section 2.3). Existing literature on VFR travel is then analysed understanding the themes and knowledge development of VFR travel research related to tourism (Section 2.4). VFR travellers' connection with migration, personal relationship and destination, the three key influences in VFR travel, which forms the theoretical basis of the remaining research objectives is discussed in Section 2.5. The research gap relating to VFR hosts is clarified in the next section (Section 2.6). In the last section, this chapter presents and justifies the definition of VFR hosts and the conceptual model that guides this study (Section 2.7), followed by a conclusion of this chapter (Section 2.8).

### **2.2 EXTENT OF VFR TRAVEL RESEARCH**

VFR travel has received research attention from various disciplines such as tourism, medicine, economics, geography, leisure and hospitality. Of note, VFR research is published widely in medical journals, with a focus on health risk and disease control among domestic and international travellers visiting their friends and relatives (Griffin, 2013b; Page, 2009). Examining VFR travel across other disciplines such as medicine can be important for a holistic understanding in particular areas, such as tourism crisis recovery and disaster management (Backer & Ritchie, 2017), and wellbeing in travellers (Seeman, 2000). However, whilst appreciating the importance of VFR travel research across other disciplines outside of tourism, this study focuses on the role of VFR hosts in VFR travel

through a tourism lens. Thus, the following discussion is based on VFR travel literature published in tourism outlets. This section specifically looks at the extent of the current body of VFR travel literature related to tourism.

In tourism, scholarly interest in VFR travel commenced after Jackson's (1990) seminal publication, which initiated discussions regarding the underestimation of VFR travel in official tourism statistics and demonstrated the importance of doing further research in this field. That study (Jackson, 1990) also highlighted the role of immigration in generating and influencing the direction and flow of a significant proportion of VFR travel. Subsequently, Jackson's (1990) article led to a special edition of an international journal- *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, 1995, Volume 6 (1), and an entire international conference was dedicated to VFR travel in 1996. The majority of the studies in the special issue and subsequent international conference highlighted the importance of VFR travel demonstrating its significant contribution to the overall travel numbers around the world, either as a trip purpose or activity. There were several studies in the special issue and the conference proceedings that also looked at the commercial or economic aspects (such as the use of commercial accommodation) and behavioral aspects (such as profile and trip characteristics, and segmentation) of VFR travel (Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995; Meis et al., 1995 ). The relationship aspect of VFR travel indicating differences between those visiting friends (VFs) as opposed to those visiting relatives (VRs) was also highlighted by two studies (Hay, 1996; Seaton & Tagg, 1995).

However, despite this initial wave of interest, little research progress has been made in the three decades that have passed since 1990. The first content analysis of VFR travel research highlighted that only 39 VFR travel articles were published in tourism journals from 1990-2010 (Griffin, 2013b). However, that research was limited to analysing journal articles and

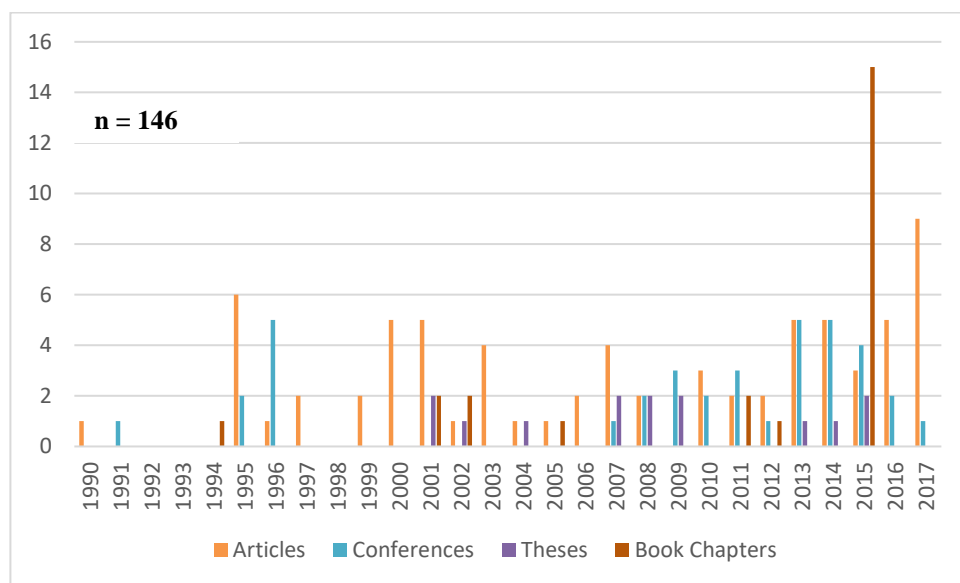


therefore did not fully represent the extent of research undertaken in the field. A more recent and comprehensive content analysis of VFR travel research that included full conference papers, theses, and book chapters as well as journal articles identified 129 VFR travel publications (of which around half were journal articles) from 1990-2015 (Yousuf & Backer, 2015). Despite the differences in approaches, both the content analysis studies on VFR travel research demonstrated the paucity of research in the field related to tourism. A further content analysis conducted for this thesis incorporated the most recent VFR travel publications. In doing so this study explored the existing VFR studies including journal articles, conference papers and book chapters identifying how VFR research has evolved overtime through the use of research method and choice of topic since its inception in 1990. A total of 146 tourism-related VFR travel publications were identified through that content analysis published from 1990 to 2017. It is also worth noting that a second, special issue dedicated to VFR travel was recently published by the International Journal of Tourism Research (2017). Some of the papers viewed through early online access were included in the content analysis undertaken for this study.

The findings of the content analysis conducted for this thesis are represented in Figure 2.1, which demonstrates the distribution of current VFR travel publications across different years. Figure 2.1 also illustrates the degree of progress that VFR travel research has made over the years since 1990 based on the number of research outputs in different publication categories. As depicted in Figure 2.1, VFR travel research has been progressing slowly since its inception in 1990, but with increased activity more recently. Given the breadth of analysis presented in Figure 2.1 (such as journal articles, conference paper, theses and book chapters), the number of VFR research output is still very low, relative to other travel categories. For instance, a content analysis on articles published in a particular tourism journal reported 175 articles related to nature-based travellers from 1993-2007 (Lu & Nepal,

2017). Even the travel categories such as farm and conference had 60 journal papers from 1993-2007 in that Journal. For this reason, VFR travel researchers consistently express concern about the lack of VFR travel research over the years (Backer, 2007, 2012; Backer & Hay, 2014; Griffin, 2013b; Jackson 1990; Morrison & O’Leary, 1995; Yousuf & Backer, 2015). As of the next section (Section 2.3) identifies the major reasons that VFR travel has not received more research attention.

**Figure 2.1: VFR Publications by Year (From 1990 to 2017)**



## 2.3 REASONS FOR LACK OF VFR TRAVEL RESEARCH

Various reasons have been put forward to explain why VFR travel has been overlooked, relative to its size. Backer (2007) outlined eight major reasons to explain why VFR travel had been overlooked:

1. Absence of a comprehensive definition: Until recently, there was no definition of VFR travel, which highlights the lack of advanced thinking that has occurred in the field.
2. Discrepancy with existing data: Since official statistics provide information on VFR by purpose of visit or VFR by accommodation, different statistics are used to

understand the ‘size’; and neither measures the size of VFR travel.

3. Difficult to measure: VFR travel is difficult to measure and resource-intensive due to there being different VFR types.
4. Lack of lobbying: VFR travel lacks a group to lobby on its behalf.
5. Perceived minor economic impact: VFR travel suffers a perception problem where it is often considered to be a commercially insignificant sector.
6. Negligible attention in tourism textbooks: VFR travel is scarcely mentioned in tourism textbooks, which typically results in it not being taught to future tourism marketers/managers.
7. Difficult to influence: VFR travel is often considered to be a group driven by obligation that cannot be influenced in their behaviour.
8. VFR is not ‘sexy’: VFR travel is often considered to be a ‘boring’ group to market to compare with the more ‘glamorous’ international marketing.

A decade has passed since these claims were made by Backer (2007) and it is appropriate to re-examine the contemporary relevance of those claims in order:

**1. VFR travel lacks a comprehensive definition:** VFR travel was predominantly defined as either comprising people who travel for VFR purpose (Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Hu & Morrison, 2002; Yuan, Fridgen, Hsieh, & O’Leary, 1995) or who stay with friends and relatives (Boyne et al., 2002; King, 1994). VFR travel was also defined as a travel motivation and activity (Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison, Green, & O’Leary, 2000; Pearce & Moscardo, 2006). Particularly, Moscardo et al. (2000) proposed an initial typology through

combining five different attributes of defining VFR travel: sector (as a major motive/trip type or as an activity), scope (international and/or domestic), effort (short and/or long-haul), accommodation used (accommodated by friends/relatives, commercial accommodation, or a combination), and the focus of the visit (visiting friends, visiting relatives, or a combination) (see Figure. 2.2). However, none of those approaches was comprehensive enough to represent the full range of VFR travellers.

**Table 2.1: An Initial Typology of VFR Travel**

Sector	Scope	Effort	Accommodation Used	Focus of Visit
Visiting Friends & Relatives  As  1.Major motive or Trip type, or  2.As one activity	Domestic	Short Haul	AFR (either with friends or relatives)	VF,VF,VFVR
			NAFR (Accommodated at least one night in commercial properties)	VF,VF,VFVR
		Long Haul	AFR	VF,VF,VFVR
			NAFR	VF,VF,VFVR
	International	Short Haul	AFR	VF,VF,VFVR
			NAFR	VF,VF,VFVR
		Long Haul	AFR	VF,VF,VFVR
			NAFR	VF,VF,VFVR

**Source:** Moscardo et al. (2000, p.252)

A more all-inclusive definition now exists; VFR travel “*is a form of tourism involving a visit whereby either (or both) the purpose of the trip or the type of accommodation involves visiting friends and/ or relatives*” (Backer, 2007, p. 369). Later, a “VFR Travel Definitional Model” (Backer, 2009, p. 11) was developed (Figure 2.2) to visually represent the existence

of different types of VFR travellers within VFR travel. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, the model presents VFR travel in a simple matrix form indicating VFR travellers can fall into three VFR categories. The first type is Pure VFRs (PVRs) located in the top left-hand corner and whose primary purpose is to visit friends and relatives; and they also stay with them. The second VFR category is the ‘Exploitative’ VFR group (EVFRs) who are those staying with their friends or relatives but who state that VFR is not the main purpose of visit. The third VFR category, in the top right-hand corner, is the ‘Commercial’ VFR group (CVFRs) whose primary purpose of visit is VFR but they stay in commercial accommodation. The residual category represents the non-VFR travellers.

**Figure 2.2: VFR Travel Definitional Model**

	Accommodation: Friends & family	Accommodation: Commercial
Purpose of Visit: VFR	✓ PVFRs	✓ CVFRs
Purpose of Visit: Non-VFR	✓ EVFRs	✗ non-VFRs

*Source: Backer (2009, p. 11; 2010c, p.59; 2012a, p.76; 2015, p.57)*

Backer’s (2007) definition has subsequently been adopted by the majority of VFR researchers as the most comprehensive way of defining VFR travel (e.g. Backer, 2010b, 2012a, 2015; Backer & Lynch, 2016; Capistrano, 2013; Dwyer et al., 2014; Gafter & Tchetchik, 2017; Rogerson & Hoogendoorn, 2014; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Uriely, 2010). Moreover, because of its simplicity, the VFR travel definitional model (Backer, 2009) has

also been used as a conceptual framework to support a number of succeeding studies attempting to better understand the VFR types as well as the size of VFR travel through incorporating different VFR types together ( Backer, 2010c, 2012a, 2015; Oliveri, 2015). For example, Backer (2012a) demonstrated that VFR travel represents 48% of Australia's total overnight visitor market when calculating the combined three VFR travellers' categories. Similarly, another study found that 35% of the total trip undertaken in Italy comprises VFR travel when all the three types of VFRs are combined (Oliveri, 2015). Conversely, recent research based on only PVFRs estimated that only 26% of travellers in the USA are VFR travellers, which appeared an underestimation of substantiality of VFR travel market in the USA (O'Leary, Lee, Kim, & Nadkarni, 2015).

**2. Discrepancy in the official VFR travel data:** VFR travel research was initiated through increased awareness of the underestimation of VFR travel numbers in the official tourism statistics (Jackson, 1990). Subsequently, Backer (2007) stated that official tourism statistics could not be used to measure the size of VFR travel. This issue is still relevant, as official statistics still provide data on VFR by the main purpose of visit, or by accommodation (i.e. visitors who stay with friends and relatives) only, neither of which provides the total size of VFR travel. Consequently, each statistic, if used as a measurement tool, underestimates the size of VFR travel since the proportion of VFR travellers varies depending on which category of VFR travel is used. Despite the discrepancy with the existing official sources, almost half (45.5%) of the VFR travel studies published from 1990-2010 used secondary data sources (Griffin, 2013b).

**3. Difficulty of measuring VFR travel:** To obtain a holistic understanding of VFR travel, different groups of VFR travellers (as indicated in Figure 2.2) need to be incorporated, which requires gathering multiple aspects of VFR travel data. For example, since VFR

travel centrally involves local residents as hosts, both visitors and local residents need to be surveyed in order to gain a full appreciation of the profiles and characteristics of the segment. However, few studies have measured the size of VFR travel by incorporating different VFR travellers (Backer, 2012a, 2015; Oliveri, 2015) and only Backer (2015) has additionally surveyed local residents. Thus, the gap in research identified a decade ago, persists.

**4. The segment lacks a lobbying group to champion it:** Because DMOs, are responsible for destination or local tourism marketing, are heavily influenced by the commercial operators, they tend to ignore VFR travel when developing marketing campaigns. Despite having greater awareness about VFR travel, DMOs are still not committed to targeting VFR travel separately believing that VFR travel can be influenced by generic marketing campaigns (Backer, 2010c; Backer & Morrison, 2015).

**5. Wrong economic perception:** VFR travel is underestimated because of the perception that VFR travel generates a minor economic impact. Clearly, travel generates revenue for destinations as travellers spend money through participating in varied activities and visiting local attractions (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). However, VFR travellers were assumed only to come to visit their friends and relatives and be unlikely to participate in touristic activities during their visit; consequently spending significantly less compared to other travellers (Morrison, Woods, Pearce, Moscardo, & Sung, 2000; Morrison & O’Leary, 1995; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). Moreover, VFR travellers were believed to be a commercially unattractive group who do not stay in commercial accommodation. However, empirical research on VFR travellers’ activities and spending demonstrates that they are not only visiting their friends and relatives, but also spending substantial amounts of money across a range of categories (Backer, 2007, 2010a; Lehto et al., 2001). In some destinations, VFR

travellers have a long length of stay, which provides VFR travellers with more opportunities for spending and participating in a wide-range of activities (Backer, 2007, 2012a; Havitz, 2007; MacEachern, 2007; Scheyvens, 2007).

Research has also shown that a large proportion of VFR travellers stay in commercial accommodation despite having friends and relatives in the visiting destinations (Backer, 2010b). Although VFR travel research has focused more on the commercial aspects of VFR travel, the volume of research that specifically looks at the spending pattern and use of commercial accommodation of VFR is still low (only three of the existing VFR travel research) (Yousuf & Backer, 2015). Therefore, there is still a need for more research examining the spending patterns and use of commercial accommodation of VFR travellers.

**6. Tourism textbooks:** Tourism textbooks only briefly discuss VFR travel, resulting in a lack of education of the field. The neglect of VFR travel in tourism textbooks has not improved and as such this comment is still valid today. Whilst there is now an academic book dedicated to VFR travel (i.e. Backer & King, 2015), this is not a textbook. As such, there remains a need for incorporation of VFR travel into tourism textbooks so that the topic can be included in foundation tourism studies to educate future tourism managers and marketers.

**7. Difficult to influence:** VFRs were assumed to be difficult to influence. This was, Backer (2007) argued, in part because of the focus on the traveller, overlooking the key role of VFR host. This claim is still current as the majority of VFR travel research has focused on VFR travellers ignoring the influencing role of VFR hosts within VFR travel (Griffin, 2013a; Yousuf & Backer, 2015).



**8. Unattractive segment to research:** VFR was not considered a glamorous segment to research. Although the recent development of VFR travel research has established the magnitude and commercial significance of VFR travel, the volume overall is still low.

So the re-examination of the issues that were raised by Backer (2007) regarding the lack of VFR travel research demonstrated that VFR travel research made some significant advancement, but most of the issues still persist. The next section (Section 2.4) discusses different aspects of VFR travel research within the existing VFR travel literature.

## **2.4 VFR TRAVEL RESEARCH THEMES**

This section discusses the key research topics covered by existing VFR travel literature, and will thereby address Research Objective One. VFR travel research is discussed under four major themes in this section. The first theme ‘Volume of VFR Travel’ outlines the existing research related to the measurement of VFR travel (Section 2.4.1).

VFR travel research which examines the profile and trip characteristic of VFR travellers is presented in the second research theme ‘Characteristics of VFR Travellers’ (Section 2.4.2). A smaller area of focus, local residents as VFR hosts have received some important and valuable research attention, and is discussed under the third research theme ‘The Role of VFR Hosts’ (Section 2.4.3). The fourth research theme, ‘Social Aspect of VFR Travel’, focuses on the non-economic perspective of VFR travel related to the experience of VFRs hosts and travellers involved into VFR travel (Section 2.4.4). These four research themes are discussed in detail below.

### **2.4.1 VOLUME OF VFR TRAVEL**

As previously noted, VFR travel research commenced with Jackson (1990) highlighting the underestimation of VFR travel in the official tourism statistics that VFR travel represented

a residual category of holiday or leisure-based travel. As a result, early VFR travel research in the 1990s focused on understanding the measurement of VFR travel undertaken in different parts of the world, such as in Australia (Morrison et al., 1995), the USA (Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995), Canada (Meis et al., 1995), the Netherlands (Yuan et al., 1995), and Northern Ireland (Seaton & Tagg, 1995).

All of these studies have demonstrated that VFR travel, as a separate category, shared a substantial proportion of the overall travel numbers in those countries. For example, Yuan et al. (1995) examined the purpose of visit data drawn from the official sources in the USA and Canada and reported that 41% of the Dutch overseas travellers in the USA and Canada were VFRs, representing the highest category of all travel forms (such as leisure and business). Similarly, Braunlich and Nadkarni (1995) examined the purpose of visit data of domestic travellers in the USA and reported that 33% of travellers were VFR travellers whereas 27% of travellers were for pleasure. While these early VFR travel studies improved the understanding of VFR travel as a separate travel form they were limited to secondary data, and represented a single group of VFR travellers (such as, those who expressed their VFR purpose of visit or those who stayed with their friends and relatives in visiting destinations).

Later in the 2000s, a more comprehensive definition of VFR travel is established stating that VFRs are not a homogenous group but differ based on their purpose of visit and choice of accommodation (Backer, 2007). Following that, a “VFR Travel Definitional Model” (Backer, 2009) was developed (Figure 2.2) to visually demonstrate the existence of different types of VFR travellers within VFR travel. The “VFR Travel Definitional model” classified VFR travellers into three distinct groups (PVFRs, CVFRs and EVFRs) based on their variation in the purpose of visit and choice of accommodation (as discussed in the

previous section). Thus, in contrast to the early VFR research, more research studies revealed VFR travellers as a heterogeneous group with various purpose of visit and choice of accommodation.

Rogerson (2015) estimated that 72% of all domestic trips in South Africa constituted VFR travellers through assessing the official sources of purpose of visit and choice of accommodation data. However, that research was focused only on PVFRs (i.e. whose purpose is to visit friends and relatives as well as stay with their friends and relatives) and CVFRs (i.e. VFRs who stay in the commercial accommodation). Similarly, Al Suwaidi, Jaffry, and Apostolakis (2015) reported that 56% of domestic trips in the UAE were VFR travel but limited by PVFRs and EVFRs (i.e. VFRs who stay with friends and relatives but have other non-VFR purposes of visit). In contrast to other studies, Oliveri (2015) measured the full range of VFRs (i.e. PVFRs, CVFRs and EVFRs) but found relatively smaller (35%) proportion of VFR trips in Italy after combining the official domestic and international visitors' data.

The inconsistencies among the findings of the volume of VFR travel occurred since all these studies measured the volume of VFR travel using official data sources. As previously noted official tourism statistics regarding VFR travel are inadequate for comprehensive measurement of VFR as the source of the measure is based on either purpose of visit or choice of accommodation data. Therefore, existing official tourism data are assessed as unreliable sources for measuring the true volume of VFR travel including different groups of VFR travellers (Backer, 2007, 2012a; Ghaderi, 2015; Oliveri, 2015).

A comprehensive study on the volume of domestic VFR travel in Australia was conducted by Backer (2012a) through examining the full range (i.e. PVFRs, CVFRs and EVFRs) of VFR travellers. Identifying the discrepancy of existing official data sources Backer (2012a)

conducted primary research by collecting data from three different destinations in Australia. Backer (2012a) reported that almost half of the domestic VFR travellers in Australia were VFRs based on a sample size of 1,024, of which 30% were PVRs, 11% were EVFRs and 8% were CVFRs. Later, Backer (2015) conducted an updated analysis of the previous research based on a bigger sample size of 120,000, and the analysis confirmed the previous findings indicating the reliability of using primary data for measuring VFR travel number. Thus, given the holistic nature of measurement, substantiality and consistency of the findings, VFR travel can be best measured considering the full range of VFRs in the analysis through collecting primary data (Backer, 2007, 2010c, 2012a, 2015).

## **2.4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF VFR TRAVELLERS**

Another key theme evident in the literature examines the characteristics of VFR travellers. This aspect of research delved into the demographic profile (Section 2.4.2.1); trip characteristics, including travel party size, duration, timing, repeat visitation and expenditure (Section 2.4.2.2). Moreover, VFR travellers' use of different information sources for trip planning has also been researched (Section 2.4.2.3).

### **2.4.2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

The majority of the studies on VFR traveller demographics have recognised the higher prevalence of VFR travellers than non-VFR travellers among lower household income, lower education levels and older groups (Hu & Morrison, 2002; Lee et al., 2005; Moscardo et al., 2000). For example, Moscardo et al. (2000) reported the higher occurrence of couples and older age group of 60s within the domestic VFR travellers in Queensland, Australia. Similarly Hu and Morrison (2002) found the higher number of VFRs, as compared to non-VFRs among females, lower household income groups and age group of over 60s. Conversely, other studies have broadened our understanding regarding the age and household groups of VFRs. For instance, Beioley (1997) reported that 59% of the domestic

VFR travellers in the UK were aged under 34 years. Another study by Lee et al. (2005) showed a majority of VFR travellers among singles. Moreover, although the research on VFR demographics has provided an understanding about sociodemographic groups involved with VFR travel, the majority of them only focused on either one or two types of VFRs. For instance, Moscardo et al. (2000) limited their study to CVFRs whereas Beioley (1997) studied PVFRs and CVFRs.

The only study that examined VFR traveller demographics by considering the full range of VFR travellers (i.e. PVFRs, CVFRs and EVFRs) is a recent study by Backer and King (2016). Their study suggested that VFRs are more evenly distributed between younger and older demographics than the non-VFRs among domestic travellers in Australia. Moreover, their study also confirmed earlier findings that people who are on lower household income, seniors (at least 65 years) or outside of full-time employment are more engaged in VFR travel compared to engaging in other forms of travel. VFR travel is, therefore, indicated as the travel category that actively involves socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (i.e. older, lower income and education), who may be less engaged in leisure-based travel (Backer, 2016; Backer & Weiler, 2017).

#### **2.4.2.2 TRIP CHARACTERISTICS**

Existing research on VFR travellers has mostly involved in examining the trips undertaken by VFR travellers. This aspect of research has demonstrated the complexity and variation within VFR travel involving numerous purposes, decision making and activities in an individual trip. One of the basic trip characteristics of VFR travellers differentiating them from others is their purposes of visit. In leisure and business travel, visitation is usually occasional (eg. school holidays, business needs). However, unlike occasional visits for recreation or business purpose, people are likely to have various events and celebrations with family and friends at any time of a year, which requires them to visit their friends and

relatives in their destinations. For this reason, VFR travel numbers disperse evenly throughout a year, and in the off-season months when demand for leisure-based travel wanes (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2012, 2010c; McKercher, 1995; Weaver & Lawton, 2014).

Visiting friends and relatives is not necessarily obligatory, it can have also a recreational motive. This can comprise having a break with available support from friends or relatives (such as accommodation, meals, or transport). Thus, for some, VFR travel can be a means of travelling to a different location in an affordable way, which can be particularly significant during economic downturns (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2012b). Economic recession can deter people from taking expensive trips, especially if it is for recreational purposes (Liu, 2009). Consequently, VFR travel, as a proportion of total travel, can increase during economic downturns (Backer, 2012b; King, 1994). The growth of VFR travel was reported to be especially strong amongst domestic VFR travellers during economic downturns (Liu, 2009). Thus, VFR travel's obligatory and recreational aspects (with friends and family support network) makes it less susceptible to external factors such as seasonality and economic recessions.

Moreover, VFR travellers make recurrent visits to the same destination as they tend to visit the destination where their friend and relative hosts reside. For example, MacEachern (2007) found that 75% of domestic VFR travellers are repeat visitors to their visiting destinations. Similarly, Backer (2010c) demonstrated the higher tendency of repeat visitation among VFRs in comparisons to non-VFRs.

VFR travellers tend to have both long and short trip depending on the nature of trip. The majority of studies examining international VFRs (Becken & Gnoth, 2004; Lee et al., 2005; Yuan et al., 1995) found their length of stay to be longer in the destination. Interestingly, domestic VFRs demonstrated an equal tendency to take long (Ghaderi, 2015; MacEachern;

2007; Rogerson, 2015) and short visits (Boyne, 2001; Hay, 1995; McKercher, 1995; O’Leary, 2015; Seaton and Palmer, 1997). Moreover, multi-destination travellers reported longer duration than single-destination VFRs (Hu & Morrison, 2002).

Research also indicates that VFRs who stayed in paid accommodations stayed for a shorter period than those VFRs who stayed in hosts’ accommodations (Asiedu, 2008; Oliveri, 2015). However, an opposite finding obtained from the research of Braunlich and Nadkarni (1995) reported that domestic VFRs in the USA who stayed in paid accommodation stayed longer than those who stayed with their friends and relatives. This higher duration of stay of CVFRs (i.e. who stayed in the commercial accommodation) is also supported by Backer (2010a) among CVFRs in Sunshine Coast, Australia. Thus, the duration of stay appeared as a variable characteristic of VFR travel parties in existing studies.

The composition of travel party also distinguishes VFR travel from non-VFR travel. The group size of VFR travel party has been identified as relatively smaller than the non-VFR travel party, with a higher prevalence of couples among VFR travellers (Backer & King, 2016; Hu & Morrison, 2002; MacEachern, 2007; Morrison, Verginis, & O’Leary, 2000) . Moreover, VFR travellers are likely to include only household members in their travel party, whereas, non-VFR trips may also include non-household members increasing the likelihood of having larger travel parties than VFRs (Hu & Morrison, 2001). Overall, VFR travel parties were larger than non-VFRs when including children under 18 years (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2010c; Backer & King, 2016; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Hu & Morrison, 2001; O’Leary et al. 2015). In addition, VFR travel parties that stayed in commercial accommodations were larger than those staying with friends or relatives (Backer, 2010c; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995).

Very few researchers have examined VFR accommodation choice, thus perpetuating the view that the sector is of little economic value to tourism (Backer 2010a; 2015; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Hu & Morrison, 2002, Morrison et al., 2000; Moscardo et al. 2000). However, the findings of those who did reveal that VFRs share at least 20% of the number of travel parties stayed in paid accommodation. The decision regarding choice of accommodation is inevitably influenced by the travel pattern of VFR travellers. Long haul (Morrison et al. 2000; Yuan et al., 1995) and multi destination VFRs (Griffin & Nunkoo, 2016; Hu & Morrison, 2001) demonstrated a higher tendency to stay with friends and relatives. Repeat visitors also tended to stay more with their friends or relatives hosts as demonstrated by the US repeat visitors to Canada (Meis et al., 1995). So, VFR travellers' accommodation choice is multifaceted and influenced by the differences in the characteristics of travel parties, such as group size, length of stay and frequency of visit.

VFR travellers' expenditure during the trip directly influences VFR's economic contribution. Although the total trip expenditure of VFR travellers is generally lower than non-VFR travellers, it is mainly due to VFRs lower expenditure in paid accommodation and packaged tours (Backer, 2007; Hay, 1996; Lee et al. 2005; Seaton, 1996; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). However, VFR travellers' expenditure in other categories such as food and beverages, buying clothes or recreational shopping, travelling around and transportation costs are either equal to or higher than non-VFR travellers (Backer, 2007; Hay, 1996; Lee et al. 2005; O'Leary et al., 2015; Seaton, 1996; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). This category-wide expenditure varied among VFR travel parties. As Morrison et al. (2000), have also noted, outbound and long-haul VFRs spent more on travelling around but relatively less for commercial accommodation. Similarly both the single and multi-destination VFR travellers also spent more on refreshment, travelling and recreational activities but the total spending



of multi-destination VFRs was greater as they spent more on commercial lodging facilities (Hu & Morrison, 2001).

There is also an unacknowledged, retail contribution of VFR's. They tend to purchase gifts for their friends and relative hosts, which contributes to the greater total expenditure (Backer, 2010c; McKercher, 1995; Weaver & Lawton, 2014). Although the spending of VFRs in a single trip may be lower, it is substantially higher than non-VFRs when all the repeat trips are combined (Meis et al. 1995). So overall, the findings of VFR travellers' expenditure patterns demonstrate how individual areas of expenditure vary among VFR travel parties resulting in differences in total spend.

VFR travellers' extent of participation in various touristic activities and attractions is likely to be influenced by the frequency of repeat visitation in the same destination as repeat visitors indicated to spend more time in indoor activities with their friends and family hosts than the first-time visitors (Meis et al. 1995; Oppermann, 1997). Moreover, younger to middle-aged VFRs showed more variety in their touristic activities and visiting of attractions than the mature aged VFRs (Morrison et al. 1995).

#### **2.4.2.3 INFORMATION SOURCES**

Regarding trip-planning, travellers can get travel information from various sources. Information sources can be classified as internal sources, such as personal experience, and external sources like the print and visual media, word of mouth, and the internet (Hyde, 2008; Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Osti, Turner, & King, 2008). It is commonly perceived that travellers tend to start with internal sources before moving into the external sources (Osti et al., 2008). Whether travellers rely solely on internal information sources or not depends on the adequacy of travellers' current knowledge acquired from personal experience of visiting the same destination or similar destinations (Gursoy & Chen, 2000).

In the case of trip planning, VFR travellers indicated their high reliance on word-of-mouth of their friends and relatives hosts. One of the early VFR travel studies by Morrison et al. (1995) reported that domestic VFR travellers in Queensland, Australia preferred to plan their travel, relying on the word of mouth of their friends and relative hosts than advice from travel agencies and official sources. Similarly, Backer (2010b) confirmed earlier finding, demonstrating that almost 90% of VFR travellers were more likely to use the word of mouth of their friends and relatives than other available external sources such as the internet, travel agencies, television, magazines or newspaper advertisements for planning their trip. Another study by Backer (2010a) examined the information sources of CVFRs and Non-VFRs and also demonstrated that the importance of word of mouth was significantly higher even among CVFRs (80%). Other external information sources such as visitor information centres, travel agents, internet and media were more heavily relied upon by non-VFRs. So the role of hosts in the case of VFR travel certainly affects the information searching behaviour of VFR travellers as across all categories, they rely more on their hosts' advice regarding trip planning.

Despite VFR travellers' higher reliance on their host's advice and guidance they are also responsive to other external information sources. Morrison et al. (2000) and Backer (2017) demonstrated that besides friends and relatives, VFRs also looked at other traditional information sources, such as TV and radio advertisement, and brochures. Different groups of VFRs placed different levels of importance to information sources. For example, Yuan et al. (1995) reported a higher reliance on travel agents among the older aged (over 55) international Dutch VFRs. The higher reliance on travel agency also expressed by the French international visitors to the USA and Canada (Lee et al., 2005). While repeat visitors relied on previous experience of visiting the same destination (Meis et al., 1995).

Given VFR travellers' reliance on their friends and relatives hosts for trip planning, researchers have discussed the role that VFR hosts play in influencing VFR travellers decisions and choice of resulting activities (Backer, 2008; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; McKercher, 1995; Min-En, 2006; Young et al. 2007). The next section (2.4.3) discusses the existing literature on the role of VFR hosts in VFR travel, which is also connected to broader host-guest literature demonstrating the differences in the interactions between VFR hosts and other types of travellers.

### **2.4.3 THE ROLE OF VFR HOSTS**

In tourism literature, in general, the role of hosts is explored from either a commercial or social perspective. From the commercial perspective interaction between hosts and guests is considered as an economic transaction in which the role of host is viewed as the service provider and travellers as the consumer of those offered services (Aramberri, 2001; Slattery, 2002; Tribe, 2004). The social perspective focuses on the obligatory aspect of 'hosting', where the role of host is someone who is bound to provide food, shelter and safety to the visitors or guests (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Smith & Brent, 2001). So, both the economic and social research on hosting perceive the role of hosting from either an economic or personal gain or loss within which hosts have little control or influence over the decision-making authority of guests.

Moreover, most extant literature on host-guest interactions has developed from the economic and social perspective where hosts and guests are strangers and have no form of familial relationships or friendships (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). So the traditional host-guest interactions as indicated by the broad host-guest literature in tourism is not totally representing the interactions that take place between hosts and guests within VFR travel. However, only a small number of VFR studies have examined the role of VFR hosts.

The VFR host was first studied by McKercher (1995), and since then only a small number of studies have examined the propensity of hosting and hosting activities. The first study on VFR hosts (McKercher, 1995), examined the local residents of a regional town in Australia, and reported that local residents hosted friends and relatives six times a year on average. Backer (2007, 2008) has also confirmed that local residents in two regional destinations in Australia were being visited by VFR travel parties multiple times a year. Moreover, Backer (2007) found VFR travellers were capable of attracting a substantial number of first-time visitors, demonstrating that local residents hosted three, first-time visitors on average, each year.

Unlike other forms of travel visiting the host is often a travel motive in the case of VFR travel (Backer, 2010c; King, 1996; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007). Research has demonstrated how the local residents who act as VFR hosts can attract friends and relatives. The first study on VFR hosts (McKercher, 1995), examined the local residents of a regional town in Australia, and reported that local residents hosted friends and relatives six times a year on average. Backer (2007, 2008) has also confirmed that local residents in two regional destinations in Australia were being visited by VFR travel parties multiple times a year.

The attracting power of hosts has been observed in different groups of residents. Bischoff and Koenig-Lewis (2007) examined university students as hosts in their place of study in the UK and found that 93% of the students had received at least one visit by their friends and family. Liu and Ryan (2011) specifically examined the hosting propensity of international VFR travel parties by international Chinese students in New Zealand among four selected universities in the Northern Island. Their study reported that 80% of the international Chinese students were visited by their friends and relatives. More recently, McLeod and Busser (2014) have examined the attraction of non-resident hosts for VFRs

by studying second home owners in Costa Rica, 85% of the respondents hosted friends and families in their second home at least three times a year. Overall, the research demonstrates that local residents are highly involved in hosting through VFR travel attracting both first-time and repeat VFR travellers multiple times a year in their residing destination.

VFR hosts can also influence VFR travellers' travel decisions and activities. As previously noted VFR travellers tend to rely more on the information provided by their friends and relatives hosts over other external sources of information regarding travel decision and activities (Backer, 2011a; Meis et al., 1995; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995; Young et al., 2007). As a result, the influence of VFR hosts' recommendation is reflected in the activities undertaken and attractions visited by VFR travellers following the recommendations of their hosts (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Young et al. 2007). Therefore, VFR hosts' recommendation is critical to the decision making and resulting activities of VFR travellers.

However, research demonstrates differences in the propensity and nature of providing recommendations to VFRs among local resident hosts (Backer, 2008; Bischoff & Koeing-Lewis, 2007; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Young et al., 2007). In a very useful study, Young et al. (2007) segmented local resident hosts into four distinct groups based on the number of VFR travel parties hosted and level of recommendations they provided to their VFRs through word-of-mouth. Those who hosted most VFR travel parties and also highly involved in recommending travel activities to VFRs were termed 'Ambassadors'. The 'Talkers', were highly involved in recommending travel to VFRs but received relatively lower travel parties than the ambassadors. The group who attracted large numbers of VFR travel parties but were less involved in word-of-mouth referrals with their VFRs were 'Magnets'. The group who scored lowest in both numbers of travel parties hosted and involvement in word-of-mouth referral were the 'Passive' or 'inactive' group.

Ambassadors and Talkers were therefore recommended as the groups that should be targeted for marketing purpose, as they are likely to be more involved with their VFRs.

VFR hosts are inclined to endorse the places and activities that they are more familiar with and perceive positively (Backer, 2008; Young et al., 2007). However, not all the local residents have the same level of awareness about their local attractions and activities and perceive the appeal of local destinations differently (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995). For this reason, DMOs should engage in promoting local attractions and activities, within the destination so that locals are well aware of the attributes and events in the destination and can recommend to their VFRs accordingly (Backer, 2011a; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995; Young et al., 2007). In addition, existing research has limitedly demonstrated that local residents tend to rely on the information provided by the DMOs and local tourism operators in newspaper, television and radio for finding out local events, hospitality and touristic options (Backer, 2010c).

VFR hosts involve themselves in non-routine activities with their VFRs (Backer, 2007; McKercher, 1995). VFR hosts participate actively and widely in different travel activities and visit local attractions with their VFR travellers, which they do not tend to do otherwise (Backer, 2008; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Shani & Uriely, 2012). However, VFR hosts' involvement in different activities varied among the various groups of residents (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Young et al. 2007). For example, permanent residents are assumed to be well aware of their local attractions, but vary in their level of endorsing local attractions and joining VFRs in tourist activities (Young et al. 2007). New residents, are less familiar with their new destinations are therefore inclined to participate widely in local touristic activities with their VFRs (Dutt, Ninov, & Haas, 2015; Griffin, 2017). Similarly, temporary local residents, like international university students, also showed a

high tendency to participate in wide-ranging activities when they were being visited by their friends and relatives from abroad (Liu & Ryan, 2011). So, through VFR, travel destinations can receive additional travel flow from the local residents serving as VFR hosts.

VFR hosts also have to incur additional expenses as a direct result of hosting VFR travellers. These additional expenses generate a hidden economic multiplier effect of VFR travel through VFR hosts, and can only be identified through studying VFR hosts (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Young et al. 2007). For example, McKercher (1995) reported that VFR hosts incurred direct, incremental expenses for hosting VFRs which constituted 25% of the total trip expenses. Similarly Backer (2007) estimated that when VFR hosts' expenditure was accounted for, the total trip cost of VFR travel increased to 22%. This substantial additional expense incurred by VFR hosts is related to the wider spending on grocery, recreational shopping, dining out, beverages, visiting paid attractions and fuel (Backer, 2007, 2008). Moreover, groceries, dining out and entertainment are the areas where VFR hosts reported to spend most (Backer, 2007, 2008).

So, the intimate relationship (either friends or relatives) between VFR hosts and travellers makes the role of VFR hosts more influential than the non-VFR hosts. VFR hosts can attract their friends and relatives to visit their destination and influence their decisions and activities by providing recommendations. Moreover, VFR travellers can contribute to the local economy through additional expenses and participating in local touristic activities through hosting. Therefore, VFR hosts have unique control or influence over the decision-making authority of guests. It follows, that DMOs should promote local attractions and activities to local residents to enrich VFR travel.

#### **2.4.4 SOCIAL ASPECTS OF VFR TRAVEL**

The social aspect research has included perceptions, feelings, and motivations for VFR travel that influence the overall experience for VFR travellers as well as hosts through social interactions. Interestingly, the social aspects of VFR travel have received the least attention in the literature. Some focus on the social aspects relating to VFR travel commenced in 2010 which has added depth to the previous research that related to economic and commercial aspects.

The experience of social interactions with others vary based on the differences in purposes or motivations, role in the interactions, difficulties or challenges in the interactions and level of involvement in the interactions (Argyle, Furnham, & Graham, 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). Some common purposes of involving into social interactions are maintaining or building positive relationships, building social networks, presentation of one's self or identity, as indicated in the social interactions literature (Argyle et al., 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001).

Regarding the purpose of maintaining or building positive relationships, the literature suggests affability is more common in our interactions with others than open hostility and conflict. Building social networks refer to someone's orientation to others as individuals, as couples or as groups. Social interactions for the presentation of identity involves controlling of information, appearance or demeanours to give an impression of one's character to others.

Someone's role in social interactions can be categorised as universal and demographic (Gahagan, 1984). Universal role refers to someone's natural social interactions with their parents, whereas demographic role refers to situational interactions depending on different age groups or genders. Moreover, social interactions can be impeded due to difficulties or



challenges in participating in social interactions (Gahagan, 1984). For instance, people living in close proximity tend to interact with each other more, however, sometimes people have fewer interactions with their next-door neighbours due to privacy. So the difficulties and challenges of participating in social interactions appeared to be a very subjective issue.

The level of involvement among the parties that involve in social interactions varies in both physical and psychological terms (Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). Physical boundaries indicate controlling spatial boundaries through moving away or closer to others, and psychological boundaries refer to limiting to controlling of information, appearance or usual demeanour.

Research regarding the experience of VFR travellers, while they visit their friends and family away from their home, indicates that VFR travellers experience both positive and negative feelings. Uriely (2010) and Shani (2013) associated positive experiences of visiting friends and relatives with the feeling of being 'at home' while negative experiences are associated with the feeling of being 'away from home'. VFR travellers felt 'at home' on their trips because of familiarity of the host destination and sociability of their friends and relatives, but at the same time felt 'away from home' due to the loss of privacy and less control over the situation (Uriely, 2010; Shani, 2013). However, a later study added that the sense of being 'at home' through the sociability of friends and relatives decreased in a repeat visit, but the sense of privacy and situational control improved (Ashtar, Shani & Uriely, 2016).

VFR travellers' experience of feeling at 'at home' and 'away from home' appears more complex, varying with the frequency of visitation (Ashtar, Shani & Uriely, 2016). In a first visit, VFR travellers connected their sense of being 'at home' with the sociability of friends and relatives as they were inclined to associate more with their friends and relatives (either

out of obligation or desire). VFRs also reported a sense of 'Away' with the increase feelings of loss of privacy and less situational control over the interactions with friends and families. However, in the repeat visits the sense of being at 'Home' through the sociability of friends and relatives decreased but the sense of privacy and situational control improved.

In a more recent study Huang, King, and Suntikul (2017) examined the perception of first and second-generation migrants when they visited their ancestral homeland. Second-generation migrants felt a closeness with their extended family in the ancestral homeland inspired by the family tradition and histories but at the same time felt obliged to defend the image of their country of birth. First-generation migrants, on the other hand, were inspired more by the feelings of nostalgia, memories and events in their country of birth, but at the same time felt an obligation of defending the image of their new adopted country.

The few studies that examine the experience of VFR hosts reveal differences in the impact and level of involvement in hosting VFRs. Similar to the findings of VFR travellers' experience, research on hosting VFRs highlighted both conveniences and challenges encountered by hosts through hosting VFRs. Hosting VFRs generates economic, psychological and physical challenges caused by the loss of privacy, extra expenditure and stress for managing guests and meeting obligations and expectations (Schänzel et al., 2014; Shani & Uriely, 2012). However, hosting VFRs also provides the opportunity of being with people central to one's life, which evokes a sense of enjoyment, altruism and expectation of reciprocity (Shani & Uriely, 2012). To obtain the most of the benefits and coping with the challenges incurred by the different hosting situations, hosts often match their level of involvement (high or low) and focus on activities (indoor or outdoor) (Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007).

## **2.5 THE THREE KEY INFLUENCES IN VFR TRAVEL**

Existing VFR travel research has demonstrated that the interaction between hosts and guests is the core component of VFR travel's economic and social impact (as discussed in section 2.4). Moreover, the literature reveals three key sub-components of VFR travel: the role of migration; intimate relationship and destination attractiveness, as influencers on the interaction between VFR hosts and guests. These three components are associated with Research Objective Three to Seven of this study. The following three sub-sections discuss the influence of migration (2.5.1), intimate relationship (2.5.2) and destination attractiveness (2.5.3) on VFR travel as indicated in the VFR travel literature.

### **2.5.1 THE CONNECTION WITH MIGRATION**

The connection between migration and tourism has been widely associated with VFR travel in tourism literature (G. Brown, 2006; Dwyer, Seetaram, Forsyth, & King, 2014; Feng & Page, 2000; Uriely, 2010; Williams & Hall, 2000). Immigrant communities have strong emotional and social attachment to their descendent homeland and maintain ties with the friends and relatives there (Gmelch, 1992; Huong & King, 2002; Lee & King, 2016). Immigrants use their time and money for return visits to their country of origin and in turn have friends and relatives visit them from their home country (Ashtar, Shani, & Uriely, 2016; Shani, 2013; Williams & Hall, 2000). VFR travel is, therefore, most likely to be impacted by migration-induced tourism.

As previously noted, VFR travel's significant connection with migration was first highlighted by Jackson (1990) indicating that the substantial size of VFR travel in Australia is closely related to the proportion of different immigrant groups (i.e. those born in overseas) and the duration of residence (i.e. how long they have been living in Australia). Subsequently, several researchers have studied the contribution of immigrant communities

on inbound and outbound tourism in Australia and demonstrated greater impact of VFR travel over non-VFR travels (Dwyer, Forsyth, King, & Seetaram, 2010; Dwyer et al., 2014; Forsyth, Dwyer, Murphy, & Burnley, 1993; Gamage & King, 1999). The immigrant population's significant contribution to the tourism flows through VFR travel have also been corroborated in other destinations, such as Portugal (Leitao & Shahbaz, 2012) and Ghana (Asiedu, 2008). The influence of migration on VFR travel has also been documented through specific migrant communities, for example, Bolognani (2014) considered the Pakistani community in the UK; Kang and Page (2000) researched the Korean communities in New Zealand; Capistrano (2016) examined the Filipino immigrants in New Zealand. These studies have reported significant VFR travel flows through the immigrant communities in their respective destinations.

It is noteworthy that local, immigrant residents not only motivate their friends and relatives to visit but also influence them to visit attractions and participate in activities, which frequently reflect culture, values, and lifestyles of the immigrant hosts (Slater, 2002; Stodolska, 2000). Research has also demonstrated different travel patterns of immigrants from the non-immigrants related to different cultural orientation (Huong & King, 2002; Lee & King, 2016). Key societal factors such as family structure, the degree of kinship, and moral obligation all vary based on an individual's cultural orientation (Williams, King, Warnes, & Patterson, 2000). For example, Asian societies display a more collective societal approach, whereas western countries are more individualistic (Capistrano, 2013; Huong & King, 2002; Lee & King, 2016). As the hosting pattern of VFR travel is largely influenced by the host's own travel pattern and level of involvement (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Slater, 2002; Young et al., 2007), the hosting behaviour of immigrant local residents may differ to that of non-immigrant local residents.

As the intensity and practice of maintaining relationships by immigrants changes over time so does the nature of travel (Stodolska, 2000; Tal & Handy, 2010; Ying-xue et al., 2013). During the assimilation process in a new culture, new immigrants experience cultural-specific or socioeconomic constraints to participating in travel (Ashtar et al., 2016; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Ying-xue et al., 2013). However, immigrants of more than ten years migration showed greater similarity with local born residents regarding their travel behaviours and activities (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Ying-xue et al., 2013). Despite the significant connection with migration, the role of immigrant hosts to non-immigrant hosts in influencing VFR travel is yet to be researched widely in VFR travel (Backer, 2012; Griffin, 2013b; Yousuf & Backer, 2015).

The experience of hosting VFR travellers varies between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents. Hosting can present different challenges for immigrant groups who reside a long geographical distance from their loved ones and with cultural differences (Griffin, 2017; Capistrano, 2013; Huong & King, 2002; Lee & King, 2016). Immigrants can meet with friends and relatives from their past homeland as well as connecting with their native cultures, values and lifestyles away from the native land through VFR travel (Schänzel et al., 2014). However, research on the social interactions of hosts with their VFRs is only just emerging with regard to understanding the experiences and activities of different immigrant and non-immigrant hosts (Backer, 2012; Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Griffin, 2013b, 2017; Yousuf & Backer, 2015).

### **2.5.2 INTIMACY BETWEEN HOSTS AND GUESTS**

Different theories regarding the nature of the relationship between hosts and guests have emerged in the literature. The growth machine theory, for example, hypothesises that relationships are subject to a personal economic gain of residents (Harrill, 2004). Similarly,

the social exchange theory suggests that the level of relationships depends on one's perception of rewards and punishments received from others (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). The social representation theory says that relationship is the representation of shared meaning held by the members in the relationship (Wagner, 2008). By contrast, the contact-hypothesis theory presents social contacts as a process of forming groups with the people of equal status and having common goals (e.g. Litvin, 2003; Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). Finally, social capital framework explains the interactions needed to achieve a common goal for a group through establishing social networks, trust and reciprocity (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). However, none of these existing theories of relationship fully captures the nature of the relationship between hosts and guests within VFR travel, which is built on intimate, familial connection and friendship.

In the case of VFR travel, the intimacy within the relationship between VFR hosts and guests acts as a travel motivation for VFRs and residents hosting VFRs (Backer, 2008; Backer, 2010c; King, 1996; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; McKercher, 1995; Shani, 2013). However, VFR travel represents two different types of intimacy (as either friends or relatives) between hosts and guests that may influence the interactions differently because the extent of familial bond and friendship bond are not the same (Granovetter, 1973; Hardimon, 1994). The family is recognised as a moral social institution where the members are tied with obligations to each other. Whereas, friendship lacks the institutional and moral ties of family and is a voluntary relationship. Familial ties are expected to be more sustainable than the voluntary relationship with friends, especially when the requirement for maintaining the relationship through regular face-to-face encounters requires significant extra effort and cost (Gafer & Tchetchik, 2017; Johnson, 2001; Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007). Therefore, a distinction needs to be made between VF and VR travel to understand the actual influence of relationship on VFR travellers decisions and activities.

Again, only a handful of VFR studies have examined the motivational effect on decisions and activities based on the nature of the VFR relationship (ie VFs or VRs) between VFR hosts and travellers (Backer et al., 2017; Gafter & Tchetichik, 2017; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). Seaton and Tagg (1995), in the first empirical study of VFs vs VRs, demonstrated the significance of disaggregating VFR travel by VFs and VRs. Their study examined international visitors in Northern Ireland and revealed VFs and VRs as two distinct categories demonstrating differences in profile and trip characteristics. VFs were younger than the VRs and more likely to be a smaller travel party composed mostly of singles and couples, and first time and short-break visitors. Moreover, VFs were more inclined towards sightseeing and entertainments. By contrast, VR travel parties were slightly older, more likely to have larger travel parties including family, repeat visitors and long stayers. Because of the family-related purpose of visit, VRs spent more money on buying gifts and shopping than on entertainment. Hay's research (1996) also found that UK domestic VRs sought entertainment. Gafter & Tchetichik (2017) also found the primary role with the decisions and activities of VR's.

In contrast to previous studies, a more recent study by Backer et al. (2017) examined the differences between VFs and VRs among both international and domestic travellers in Australia. Backer et al. (2017) found that VRs outnumbered VFs in terms of volume, length of stay and inclusion of children in the travel group – for both domestic and international travellers in Australia. However, the domestic and international VRs were younger than VFs, which is opposite to previous findings. Moreover, Backer et al. (2017) revealed a number of distinctions that had not been previously examined, such as the information source used. International VFs demonstrated a more diverse use of information sources including both traditional (such as travel agents, print advertisement, the Internet) and

social information sources (such as friends and relatives), for planning their trip. Whereas, domestic VFRs showed more reliance on friends and relatives hosts as both VFs and VRs showed reliance narrowly in friends and relatives and internet. The findings of that study reveal that VFR travellers can indeed be reached through a range of mainstream tourism marketing sources, including the traditional visual and print medium.

Specific research on experience of VFR hosts indicates that VFR hosts experience a sense of obligation while hosting relatives (VRs) such as to provide shelter, protection and care out of familial duty or belief system (Schänzel et al., 2014). Hosting motivation and subsequent activities while hosting friends versus relatives, however, has not been studied. This could further our understanding of the role of the host in VFR travel. As such, research that provides an in-depth understanding of the differences between hosting between VF and VR travellers would be a valuable addition to scholarship and practice.

### **2.5.3 DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS**

Destination attractiveness influences the choice of destination and subsequent travel activities of visitors. Destination-attributes, distance to travel and cost of the visit are pointed out as the three key elements of destination attractiveness within the tourism literature (Baxter, 1979; Cheng, Wu, & Huang, 2013; Herington, Merrilees, & Wilkins, 2016; Kim & Perdue, 2016; Nicolau, 2008). The attributes of destinations are categorised between the ‘core’ and ‘augmented’ (Cheng et al., 2013; Hu & Ritchie, 2016). Core attributes refer to the unique natural, cultural and historical characteristics or resources attached to the destination while ‘augmented attributes’ denote the functional characteristics including the supportive service and facilities, infrastructure and transport network available in a destination. Destination attributes are the sum of all perceived natural



and built capabilities that a destination offers for serving and satisfying visitors (Hu & Ritchie, 2016).

The distance or geographical proximity between the origin and visiting destination alongside with cost involves in visiting also influence the perception of destination attractiveness. These operate as deterrent factors because with an increase in travel distance and cost the demand of visiting a particular destination declines exponentially (McKercher, 2008; Nicolau & Mas, 2006).

The relative importance of the factors (destination attributes, distance and cost) in perceived destination attractiveness varies between individuals, as this is largely influenced by the travel motivation of visitors. Motivations refer to the internal forces that lead an individual to visit (such as the purpose of visit or personal interest of the visitors) (Nicolau & Mas, 2006). Destination attractiveness varies for different travel groups and based on their different purpose of visit (such as VFRs, tranquillity; discovering new places and culture) (McKercher, 2008; Nicolau, 2008; Nicolau & Mas, 2006). For this reason, the choice of destination and subsequent activities is the outcome of the interaction between destination attributes and the personal motivations of individual visitors (Nicolau, 2008; Nicolau & Mas, 2006).

There are few studies in the extant VFR travel literature (for example Backer, 2008, 2011a; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; McKercher, 1995) that specifically look at the influence of destination attractiveness on VFR travel. VFR travellers appeared more willing to visit longer distance involving more effort and cost in comparison to other travellers (pleasure, naturistic or tranquillity, cultural) because of family and friendship bonds (McKercher, 2008; Nicolau & Mas, 2006). Moreover, research shows that the destination attributes influence perceptions (Backer, 2008; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; McKercher, 1995), which in

turn influence the travel behaviour (Backer, 2008). For example, in a popular coastal tourist destination in Sunshine Coast, Australia, VFR travellers viewed the built attractions and activities as the most appealing aspects (Backer, 2011a) of the destination. There was a similar view in a coastal area in New Zealand (Lockyear & Ryan, 2007) and in a regional tourism destination in Victoria, Australia, VFR travellers were attracted more by the natural features of the destination (McKercher, 1995).

Moreover, in Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia, VFR travellers were inclined to stay longer and use commercial accommodation than in a regional destination in Victoria (Albury-Wodonga) resulting in higher spending in the Queensland destination (Backer, 2008). A recent study in Israel confirms that the attractiveness of a destination affects the length of stay, resulting in higher spending in the destination (Gafer & Tchetchik, 2017). However, in relation to individual areas of expenditure VFR travellers spend more on entertainment in a more popular tourist destination than in the regional city where they spend more on dining out, beverages and shopping (Backer, 2008; Backer, 2015).

Only two studies have examined the influence of destination attractiveness on VFR host (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995). Those studies demonstrated differences in terms of utilising local tourist attractions by the local residents when recommending VFRs. VFR hosts in Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia, perceived the local built attractions as the most appealing aspect than the VFR hosts, whereas VFR hosts in a regional city of Victoria, Albury-Wodonga, rated the natural attractions as the most appealing aspect (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995). Given the reliance of VFRs on the recommendations of their hosts, VFRs in the sunshine Coast engaged more in built attractions and activities than VFRs at Albury-Wodonga (Backer, 2008). Regarding additional expenses of hosting VFRs, residents in both Sunshine Coast and Albury-Wodonga similarly cited groceries and dining

out as their primary additional expenses but Sunshine Coast residents involved more with their VFRs in leisure shopping and visiting paid attractions (Backer, 2008).

Given the few studies, it is not possible to generalise as to the destination effect in VFR hosting and this aspect needs further research. In particular, the relative draw of metro VFR destinations versus regional is not well understood. Given the relative advantage of accessibility to services and facilities in metropolitan areas over regional areas (ABS, 2013), it is an important distinction for examining the influence of destination attractiveness of VFR hosts on VFR travel.

The discussion above (Section 2.4 and Section 2.5) has presented aspects of VFR travel that have been researched widely and also indicated areas that have received less research attention. The next section (Section 2.6) specifically discusses the subsequent research gaps identified from the existing VFR travel literature.

## **2.6 RESEARCH GAP**

Existing VFR travel literature suggests that relative to its size and demonstrated economic contribution it has received less attention than other forms of travel and that this neglect is based on a number of flawed assumptions. Overall, the volume of research in the field of VFR travel is small (as illustrated in Figure 2.1). Despite the critical role that VFR hosts have in VFR travel (as discussed in Section 2.4.3), research has focused exclusively on the VFR travellers. This study identified that only 15 out of a total of 146 existing VFR studies primarily focused on VFR hosts where their influential role has been demonstrated. However, there is a lack of knowledge on the role of VFR hosts in relation to the three key sub-components of VFR travel as a whole: migration, relationship and destination attractiveness. This is a significant research gap that requires research attention in order to further the existing economic and social understanding of VFR travel. A summary of the

current research on VFR hosts is presented in Table 2.2 to clearly demonstrate the knowledge gap relating to the role of VFR hosts within the existing literature.

As depicted in Table 2.2, the majority of the host related VFR research focuses on understanding the propensity and frequency of hosting; touristic demand by attracting VFR travellers in the local areas; additional expenditures while hosting VFRs and their influence on travel behaviours through recommending local attractions and activities to their VFRs (Backer, 2007, 2008; Griffin, 2013a; McKercher, 1995). VFR hosts have also been segmented based on their level of hosting and participation in influencing VFR travel decision and activities (Young et al., 2007). The influence of VFR hosts on the trips undertaken by VFR travellers has been studied with different groups of local residents such as permanent residents (Backer, 2007, 2008); international students (Min-En, 2006); university students (Bischoff and Koenig-Lewis, 2007), non-residents (McLeod and Busser, 2014). However, none have studied the propensity, frequency and influence of VFR hosting through immigrant local residents and how they differ from the non-immigrant local residents. Moreover, none of the studies has examined the propensity, frequency and influence of VFR hosting that differentiates between hosting friends and relatives and between metropolitan and regional areas.

Just one of the existing VFR research studies examined the travel information searching behaviour of VFR hosts (Backer, 2010c) resulting in a limited understanding of the relative importance of different information sources, potentially of great use to destination marketers (internal and external). It has already been acknowledged that cultural differences tend to influence the information needs of travellers, but the relative importance of different information sources between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents is not well understood (Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Osti et al., 2008). The host-guest relationship

in addition to destination attributes are also important for examining information searching behaviours of VFR hosts as both the factors are found to influence the information searching behaviours of VFR travellers (Backer et al., 2017; Gafter & Tchetchik, 2017).

Research on the social interactions of hosts with their VFRs is only just emerging and still lacking in terms of understanding the experiences and activities by hosts (immigrants versus non-immigrants) and relationships (VF versus VR) (eg.Griffin, 2017; Schänzel et al., 2014; Shani & Uriely, 2012). Nor have researchers examined the experience of hosting based on destination types (for example metropolitan versus regional). VFR hosts have predominantly been considered as a homogeneous group who have had friends or relatives come to stay with them. So the role of VFR hosts, acknowledging their heterogeneity (based on both purpose of visit and choice of accommodation), is necessary for a holistic understanding of this critical issue in VFR travel research.

The following section (Section 2.7) clarifies the conceptual framework adopted by this research for examining the role of VFR hosts given the migration, relationship and destination characteristics of VFR hosts.

**Table 2.2: Summary of the Research on VFR hosts**

Authors (years)	Topic of Interest	Sample	Sample Size	Method of Data collection	Analysis
<b>McKercher (1995)</b>	Examining the involvement of hosts in VFR travel activities in order to understand the size and importance of VFR travel in a regional Australian centre.	Residents of the Albury Wodonga, Australia; random sampling technique	225 house holds	Structured telephone interview	Descriptive statistics (such as trimmed means; median, range)
<b>Min-En (2006)</b>	Examining the travel stimulation of VFRs by international students in Australia	International University students in Gold Coast, QLD, Australia; convenient sampling	23 participants	Three focus group with average of eight participants	Thematic analysis
<b>Backer (2007)</b>	Examining the expenditures incurred by VFR hosts while hosting VFRs.	Residents and visitors Maroochy shire, Australia from eight different locations	629 residents and 812 visitors	Personal interviewing through two independent street surveys	Descriptive statistics
<b>Backer (2008)</b>	Understanding and assessing the role of local residents as hosting VFRs	Residents and visitors Maroochy shire, Australia from eight different locations	629 residents and 812 visitors	Personal interviewing through two independent street surveys	Comparative analysis (such as frequencies and distribution)
<b>Bischoff and Koenig-Lewis (2007)</b>	The role of university students attracting VFR travellers to their place of study.	University students in UK	629 respondents	Self-administered computer-assisted Web based survey	Descriptive (Frequency distribution) and inferential (T-test)
<b>Young et al. (2007)</b>	Developing a taxonomy of hosts for understanding the role and involvement of VFR hosts in VFR travel	Residents from the Clark County, Nevada, USA through random sampling	1109 participants	Random-dial, structured telephone interviews over a one-year period	Inferential statistics (such as cluster analysis; discriminant; analysis of variance; multivariate analysis)
<b>Liu and Ryan (2011)</b>	The role of Chinese students as hosts attracting overseas travellers in the host country	Chinese University students; New Zealand	504 respondents	open-ended interviews and self-completed surveys	Descriptive statistics (Mean, Median, SD; Frequency distribution)
<b>Shani and Uriely (2012)</b>	Experience of hosting friends and relatives (well-being)	Local residents; Eilat, Israel; snowball technique	51 residents	In-depth interviews	Thematic analysis

<b>Griffin (2013a)</b>	Conceptual discussion about researching immigrant hosts	Literature review	-	-	Literature review
<b>Capistrano (2013)</b>	VFR travel host-guest interactions	Literature review	-	-	Literature Review
<b>McLeod and Busser (2014)</b>	The role of non-resident second homeowners and their willingness in hosting VFRs in a destination.	Expatriate homeowners in Costa Rica; purposive sampling techniques	256 respondents	Online survey; expatriate second homeowners in Costa Rica	Descriptive statistics (such as mean; SD) and Inferential (such as t-test and factor analysis)
<b>Schänzel et al. (2014)</b>	Hosting experience of the Polynesian communities in New Zealand	Polynesian families in Auckland, New Zealand; snowball sampling	11 Polynesian families	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Grounded theory
<b>Griffin (2015)</b>	Conceptual discussion about the experience and implication of Immigrants hosting VFRs.	Literature review	-	-	Literature review
<b>Griffin (2017)</b>	Experience of immigrants hosting intra-regional VFRs.	Local residents; Toronto, Canada; call for participation through social media	Nine local residents, Toronto, Canada	In-depth interviews	Narrative analysis
<b>Dutt and Ninov (2017)</b>	The impact of VFR travel on expatriates-hosts' learning	Expatriate residents; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; purposive sampling	10 participants	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Grounded theory

## **2.7 EXAMINING THE ROLE OF VFR HOSTS**

The conceptual framework refers to the theoretical boundaries within which the research is conducted (Polit & Beck, 2004). This section describes the specific theoretical constructs and variables that guide this research. The discussion commences with definitional clarification of VFR hosts and then discusses the conceptual model upon which this research has built.

### **2.7.1 DEFINING VFR HOSTS**

There has been scant attention paid to an explicit definition of VFR hosts. Interestingly, as they have largely been treated as a homogenous group who have friends and relatives who visit and stay in their accommodation. The VFR definitional model is useful in that it acknowledges the heterogeneity of VFR travellers based on their purpose of visit (VFR and/or non-VFR) and choice of accommodation (stay with the hosts and/or at the commercial accommodation). As the types of VFR traveller varies, it seems axiomatic that the types of hosts should also vary based on the type of VFR travellers visiting them. For this reason, this study adopts and amends a VFR Hosts Definitional Model similar to Backer's (2012a) VFR Definitional Model; to similarly acknowledge different types of VFR host.





Figure 2.3 presents the VFR Host Definitional Model in a matrix form. The top left box of the matrix represents the first host group, the pure VFR (PVFR) who hosts those friends and relatives who come to visit for the purpose of visiting them and who also stay in their home. The second type is situated in the top right-hand box of the matrix is the commercial VFR (CVFR) host who hosts visitors who come to visit them but stay in the commercial accommodation (such as in hotel and motel). For example, visitors may stay in commercial accommodation when the group size of the visitors is too large for the host to accommodate



or in the case of a family event (such as wedding, funeral) when it is not appropriate to accommodate the visitors. Visitors may also want their personal space.

The third type is in the bottom left side of the matrix is the exploitative VFR (EVFR) host where the VFRs stay with the hosts but have other non-VFR purposes for visiting (for example, someone may stay with their friends or relatives during their holiday or business trip). The remaining group is the non-VFR hosts group who do not fall in any of the three VFR host types.

**Figure 2.3: Visiting Friends and Relatives Travel Host Definitional Model**

	Accommodation: Host's home	Accommodation: Commercial
Purpose of Visit for visitor: VFR	 PVFR host	 CVFR host
Purpose of Visit for visitor: Non-VFR	 EVFR host	 non-VFR host

*Source: Adapted from Backer (2012)*

So this research defines VFR hosts heterogeneously depending on the types of VFR travellers hosted. All three types of hosts, as indicated in figure 2.3, are recognised and considered in this study. The hosts definitional model offers a comprehensive understanding of the role of VFR hosts than previously provided.

## **2.7.2 THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY**

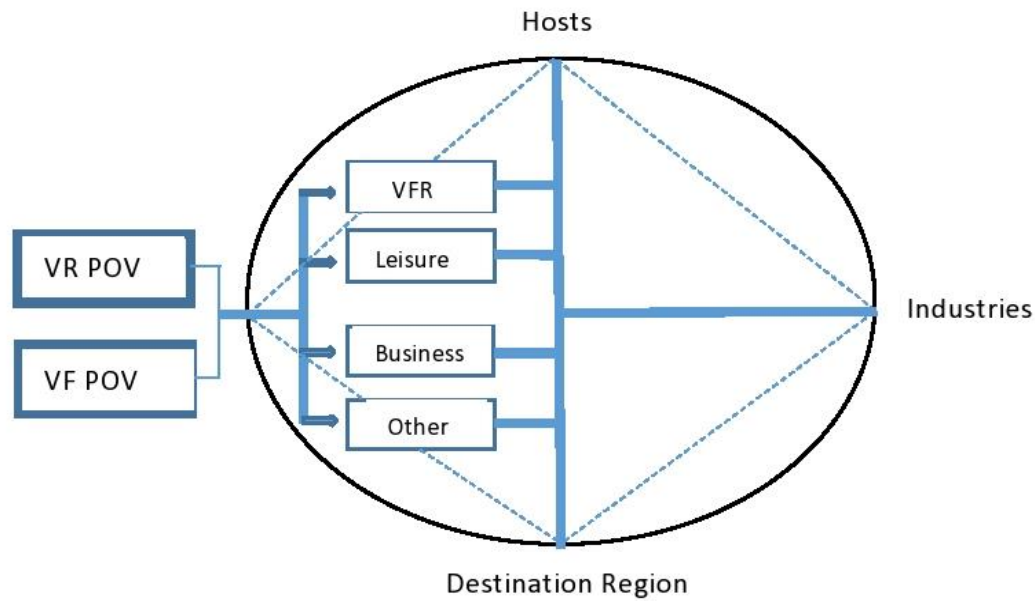
The selection of an appropriate conceptual model is an important step for guiding research. A conceptual model illustrates a systematic structure or linkages among theoretical

constructs which together describe a particular concept (Polit & Beck, 2004; Radwin & Fawcett, 2002). Very few conceptual models have been developed that describe the different aspects of VFR travel.

One of the earliest models relating to VFR travel was the VFR Travel Definitional Model, as illustrated in Figure 2.2 (Backer, 2009), which describes the typology of VFR travel. The VFR Travel Definitional Model was developed to visually represent how the different groups of VFR travellers vary based on the purpose of travel and choice of accommodation (i.e. PVFRs, CVFRs and EVFRs). The VFR Travel Definitional Model was used by several researchers as the conceptual model to assess the true volume of VFR travel by including the full range of VFR travellers in the analysis as outlined in the model (e.g. Backer, 2010a, 2012). This research adopts a holistic definition of VFR as demonstrated in the VFR Travel Definitional Model but not as the conceptual model as it relates to VFR travellers, not VFR hosts.

Another conceptual model of VFR travel is the VFR Purpose of Visit (POV) Model (Backer, 2009). As illustrated in Figure 2.4 that the POV model demonstrates different trip purposes of VFR travellers, both VFR and non-VFR (such as leisure, business and other) purpose of visit, through distinguishing between those who visit friends (VFs) and those who visit relatives. This model also illustrates VFR travellers' relationships with the destination regions, industries, and hosts that each of these elements can influence the purpose of visit. This model was used to examine the motivational differences between VFs and VRs (e.g. Backer, 2010b; 2010c). Although the POV Model illustrates the interactions between VFR travellers with VFR hosts, it only represents the influence of hosts based on the purpose of visit specifically. This study, by contrast, is concerned with the wider role of hosts in VFR travel. Therefore the POV model proved unsuitable as the conceptual model for this study.

**Figure 2.4: VFR Purpose of Visit (POV) Model**



*Source: Adapted from Backer (2009)*

The VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model (Figure 2.5) has been used to explore the characteristics and behaviours of VFR travellers based on the nature and extent of relationships with VFR elements (Backer, 2010a). The VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model is especially useful in that it provides a framework for the main objective of this research which is concerned with exploring the characteristics and behaviour of VFR hosts, and examining the nature and extent of their relationship with other tourism system elements, such as tourists, industry and destination region.

The VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model (Figure 2.5) is appropriate as a conceptual model as it is a systems model. Systems models provide a holistic approach that illustrates the required elements for a particular system to exist (Leiper, 2004; Weaver & Lawton, 2014). The VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model (Figure 2.4) illustrates six interrelated elements through which VFR travel occurs. In particular, it shows the central role of hosts in VFR travel and hosts' relationship with other VFR travel elements. The VFR Whole Tourism

Systems Model thus provides a useful framework for understanding the impact of VFR travel to the host destination, as the nature (positive or negative) and extent of VFR travel to tourism depends on the appropriate management of hosts (Backer, 2008).

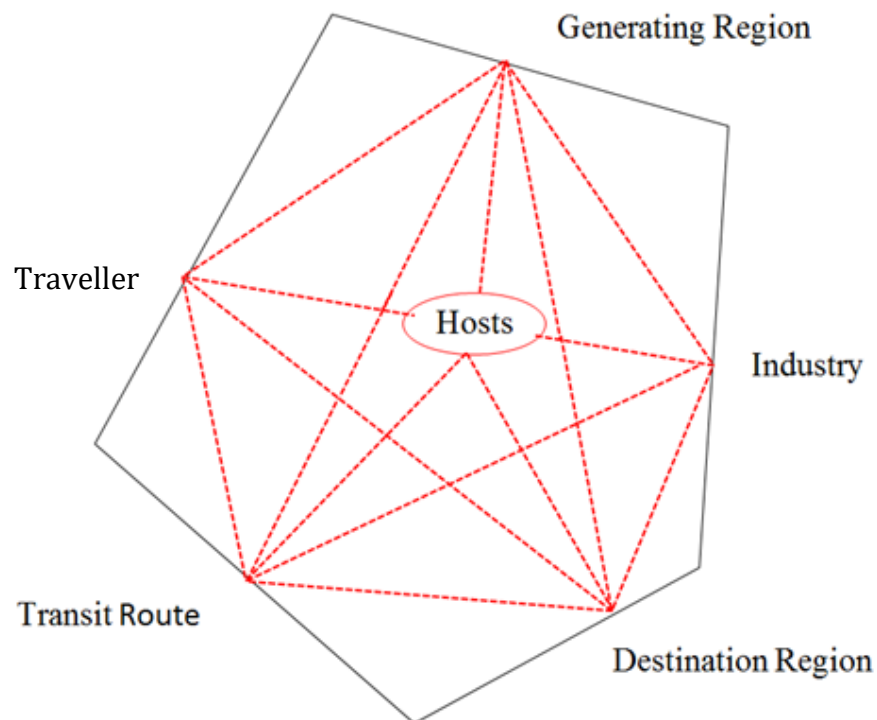
In addition, the study of VFR travel requires the gathering and analysis of a wide range of information in order to gain a comprehensive understanding because of its complex and heterogeneous nature (Lehto, Morrison, & O’Leary, 2001). Systems models can help to organise complex phenomena, which are otherwise too difficult to describe and analyse (Leiper, 2004). Therefore, to study the role of hosts in VFR travel, the VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model (Backer, 2008, p.61) is adopted as an appropriate conceptual model for this study.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the VFR Whole Tourism System Model and its six interrelated elements, demonstrating that hosts are in the centre of VFR travel system. Overall, the model demonstrates relationships (the red dotted lines), where VFR travellers visit hosts in a destination and hosts are likely to influence the relationship VFR travellers have with all other whole tourism system elements. Existing literature (refer Table 2.2) demonstrates the influence of VFR hosts on VFR travellers through motivating VFRs to come to visit their destination regions, providing travel related information and recommendations to VFRs which VFR travellers tend to rely on and implement in their travel activities. As a result, the role of VFR hosts in influencing VFR travel is reflected through the trip characteristics of VFR travellers attracted by VFR hosts and decisions and activities (such as main purpose of visit, composition of travel parties, choice of accommodation, duration of stay, frequency of repeat visit, activities participated).

Moreover, VFR hosts not only influence VFR travel through influencing VFR travellers’ travel decisions and activities but also have a direct impact through their hosting decisions

and activities. VFR hosts actively participate in travel activities with their VFRs to contribute to the local economy through their direct hosting expenses, which may happen otherwise. As the extent and nature of the role of VFR hosts can vary, this research considers migration (COB & duration of stay), destination (metropolitan vs regional) and relationship (hosting VFs vs. VRs) attributes of local residents for examining the differences.

**Figure 2.5: VFR Whole Tourism System Model**



*Source: Backer, 2008, p.61*

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the extent of existing VFR travel literature and the factors influencing the extent of current research. VFR travel research themes related to tourism have been discussed, which satisfied Research Objective One. The literature related to VFR

hosts has been reviewed that satisfied Research Objective Two. Subsequently, VFR traveller's connection with migration, personal relationship with VFRs and destination attractiveness has also been discussed and this forms the theoretical basis of the remaining research objectives of the study. The research gap relating to the role of VFR hosts has been established and is followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework for the study. The conceptual framework of the study introduced the VFR Travel Host Definitional Model and clarified the conceptual model selected for the study - the VFR Whole Tourism System Model. The next chapter (Chapter 3) will discuss the methodology and overall research design of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research process that has been followed in this study. It discusses the research paradigm that governs the methodological framework (Section 3.2), methods of data collection (Section 3.3) and approach (section 3.4) in conducting the research. It also covers the design and execution of the quantitative research carried out in response to the Research Objectives Three to Six (Section 3.5), followed by the qualitative research conducted in order to address the Research Objective Seven (Section 3.6). This chapter concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations of this study (Section 3.7), followed by the conclusion of this chapter (Section 3.8).

### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research requires a methodological framework for designing and conducting studies in the context of a particular paradigm. A paradigm refers to a set of beliefs or way of examining a social phenomenon, which is commonly described through an ontological and epistemological basis (Guba, 1990; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Ontology refers to the nature of reality or perceived world view, while epistemology denotes the nature of knowledge (Jennings, 2010; Klein, 2005). The four commonly used paradigms in tourism research are positivist, realist, interpretivist, and pragmatist (Jennings, 2010). Each of these has its respective difficulties and consequences for conducting research. Therefore, the important thing for a researcher is to realise the basic premises of the research paradigms and apply it appropriately to the research approach, data collection and resulting knowledge construction of a study (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2009). Table 3.1 adapted from Jennings (2010), illustrates the basic differences amongst the four paradigms in terms of ontology, epistemology and commonly used method.

The *positivist* paradigm embraces the view of observing a world guided or organised by universal laws and truths (Saunders et al., 2009). For this reason, the positivist paradigm explains a social phenomenon through causal relationship. Positivist research claims to be objective and value-free because the researcher does not impact or influence the results with their subjective view and indeed examines the laws and truths that explain causal relationships empirically (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Research that follows a positivist paradigm adopts a quantitative research method for explaining behaviour founded upon observable or testable facts through which generalisations can be made (Uncles & Wright, 2004).

The *realist* paradigm, is similar to positivist paradigm as it adopts scientific approach regarding knowledge development. The realist denotes a reality independent of human mind or senses accessible through the researcher's tools and theoretical speculations (Bryman & Emma, 2003). The adoption of realist paradigm leads the researcher to understand the meaning of the collected data. The assumption behind the realist paradigm is that meaning of data related to certain social phenomena becomes clearer when two forms of reality (Direct and Critical) are constructed (Saunders et al., 2009). Direct reality refers to that reality which can be directly experienced through our senses, assuming that 'what we see is what we get'. Critical realism opposes this view of direct reality arguing that what we experience through our senses is not the things directly but the sensation and images of the things. So, in critical realism just experiencing the reality through senses is not enough for understanding the reality as we need to comprehend the resulting mental process after the sensation meets the senses. The realist research is primarily quantitative in nature but also use qualitative data when aiming for a more in-depth understanding of data.



In contrast to the previous two paradigms, the *interpretivist* paradigm adopts the view that the world is constituted of multiple realities as people make or associate meanings differently while they interact with the world around them (Johnson & Murray, 2006). For this reason, the interpretivist research is intersubjective rather than objective since the views of all social actors are taken into consideration and are equally evaluated for having a co-created understanding. Interpretivist research is qualitative in nature as the researcher seeks to understand the individual and group perceptions within a natural setting from an insider perspective (Williamson & Johanson, 2013).

*Pragmatism*, finally provides a more practical approach by endorsing the adoption of different perspectives to collect and interpret data. Unlike the alternative paradigms, pragmatism acknowledges the centrality of the research problem and allows for all approaches required to understand the problem without showing loyalty to any particular paradigm or forms of reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). As pragmatism is not method-bound, it allows the researcher to adopt both qualitative and quantitative approaches (i.e. mixed method) in the formation of knowledge.

Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) argue that pragmatism help researchers to avoid engaging in what they see as rather pointless debates about the nature of truth and reality. As tourism is a complex phenomenon which requires a pluralistic view (T. Veal, 1998), the pragmatism paradigm is deemed suitable for this research. It is more holistic and allows consideration of different aspects in order to understand a research problem.

**Table 3.1: An Overview of Major Paradigms in Tourism Research**

<b>Paradigm</b>	<b>Positivist</b>	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Interpretivist</b>	<b>Pragmatist</b>
<b>Ontology</b>	Universal truths and laws	Fallible truths produced by social and historical circumstances	Multiple realities	Multiple view chosen to see 'What works' in the empirical world.
<b>Epistemology</b>	Objective	Objective, albeit possibility of researcher bias is acknowledged	Intersubjective	Objective and subjective in order to solve problems
<b>Method</b>	Quantitative	Primarily quantitative; may use some qualitative	Qualitative	Mixed method: quantitative and qualitative

*Source: Jennings (2010)*

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

Method in research refers to, “the tools or instruments employed by researchers to gather empirical evidence or to analyse data” (Sarantakos, 1998, p.32). A research method can be either qualitative or quantitative or mixed method using both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative and quantitative methods have some differences and similarities. In qualitative analysis, adequacy refers to sufficient data so that saturation occurs, i.e. little incremental variation from additional data (Neuman, 2011). Quantitative methods collect measurable data and attempt to quantify differences by adopting rigorous measurement through the use of statistical methods of analysis (Bryman & Emma, 2003). Quantification of data can deliver complex information in a “succinct, easily understood form” (A. Veal, 2006). Qualitative researchers examine patterns for similarities through acquiring in-depth knowledge of cases. Both methods strive to avoid falsification and false conclusions.

As VFR tourism is a complex phenomenon and heterogeneous in nature (Backer & King, 2016; Backer et al., 2017; Lehto et al., 2001; Ren, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010), quantification of data would help assemble complex information in a succinct and

comprehensive form (A. Veal, 2006). Therefore, the quantitative method was deemed suitable in order to systematically capture and compare trip characteristics and behaviours of local residents hosting VFR travellers as outlined in the Research Objectives Three to Six. However, the quantitative method alone was not suitable for capturing and comparing the experience and motivation of VFR hosting behaviours of local residents (Research Objective Seven). Therefore, qualitative research was required to explore the experiences and underlying motives of VFR hosting as to form a primary understanding of local residents' hosting behaviours. Qualitative research seeks to gain deep insight into the subject matter through its associated methods (Weaver & Lawton, 2014) and is appropriate in this instance where there is little known about VFR hosting. Thus, the mixed method approach was adopted for this research as it needed to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods regarding data collection and analysis to serve the research objectives of this study.

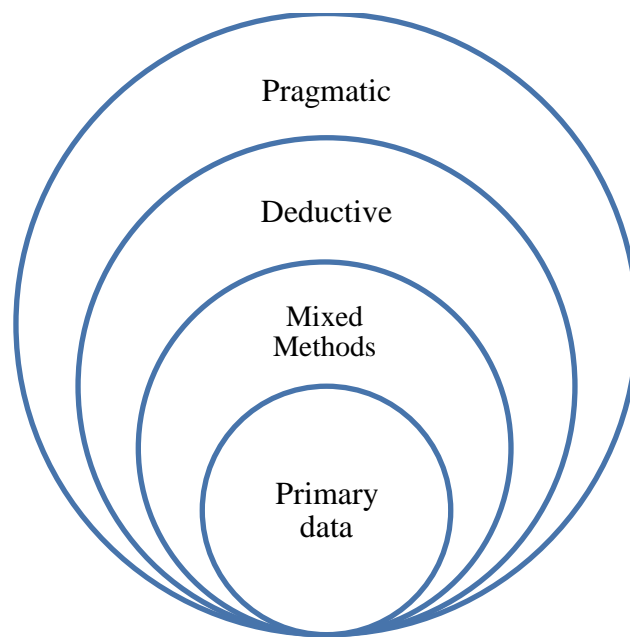
### **3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Any research follows either a deductive or an inductive approach to conducting research (Neuman, 2011). Research based on the deductive approach begins with a theory that assists in developing a conceptual framework, which is then examined by empirical observation. In the inductive approach by contrast, a theory is developed from the observation of empirical data. This research follows the deductive process as it begins with a specific body of literature from which a conceptual model (i.e. The VFR Whole Tourism Systems Model) has been adopted, which in turn is examined through empirical data.

In the research process, data can be collected from the primary or secondary sources (Saunders et al., 2009). This research collected primary data to serve the research purposes as there were no secondary data sources available that could have been used satisfactorily

to address the research objectives. Thus, the overall framework of this research is illustrated in Figure 3.1. This research then follows deductive approach under a pragmatic paradigm, based on mixed method research and conducted through collecting primary data. The following two sections (section 3.5 and 3.6) describe the research design and research procedures.

**Figure 3.1: Research Framework**



### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND EXECUTION: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

To satisfy Research Objectives Three to Six, quantitative research is conducted, with measurable primary data collected through an online survey. Surveying is a data collection technique, “in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 360). Surveying is a widely used method for collecting primary data in tourism research (Veal, 2006; Weaver & Lawton, 2014).

Surveys are classified as explanatory, predictive, evaluative and descriptive serving different research purposes (Babbie, 2004). The explanatory survey is designed to test hypothesis whereas a predictive survey is used to estimate future trends/patterns based on the past and current data set. In contrast, evaluate surveys determine the effectiveness of newly implemented strategies by comparing existing strategies. Descriptive surveys, on the other hand, describe the nature of study population as it seeks who (characteristics), what (activities & preferences) and how (social and economic status) of the study population (Jennings, 2010). Given that this research focus was a study of VFR hosts, their activities and preferences and different attributes (such as immigration status; place of residence, relationship with the visitors), it adopts the descriptive survey approach.

Surveys can be conducted either by mail; telephone; intercept or online. Each method of the survey has advantages and disadvantages. The phone interview is an easy to reach technique and provides greater control over the interview but has a high refusal rate (Saunders et al., 2009). The intercept or street survey is particularly useful in time constrained situations as it directly approaches potential respondents for a quick response. It is difficult to get high sample coverage and for conducting a long survey however (A. Veal, 2006). The mail survey is advantageous over others for its lower cost, greater accessibility to the sample population and effectiveness in asking sensitive questions by the participants (Neuman, 2011). However, the mail survey is associated with low response rate and incomplete questionnaire (Jennings, 2010).

This research adopted an online or internet survey. The online survey is a technologically advanced method and even more cost-effective than the mail survey and provides, potential accessibility to participants and opportunities for asking sensitive questions (Neuman, 2011). Although there is a risk of encountering technical difficulties while administering

online surveys this can be avoided by having proper technical settings and following the software operating guidelines correctly (Saunders et al., 2009).

The survey can be either completed by respondent or interviewer. Interviewer completion surveys are likely to generate more accurate and complete surveys but can be very costly to administer and provide low confidentiality (Jennings, 2010). Respondent completed surveys are more convenient and also assure confidentiality of the interviewees (A. Veal, 2006). This research, therefore adopted an online, respondent completed questionnaire technique.

### **3.5.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF RESIDENT SURVEY:**

In order to undertake the quantitative research, a national resident survey among the local residents of Australia was conducted online. The questionnaire was developed by using the SurveyMonkey software tool. The quantitative survey included both open-ended and close-ended questions, in consideration of the diverse nature of the questions needed to satisfy the Research Objectives Three to Six. A hard copy of the questionnaire used in the online resident survey is attached in Appendix 1.

The type and number of questions were two key considerations in developing the survey, in avoiding unnecessary questions and not making the survey too long. So the number of open-ended questions in the survey was kept to as few as possible as these take longer to answer than the close-ended questions. The questions were also kept short and ‘straight to the point’ so that it can be quickly read and comprehended by the participants. Agree/disagree questions were avoided as these are prone to more bias responses (Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008).

To maximise response rates, only questions that directly related to the objectives of the research were included in the survey. Therefore, local residents were asked about their

geographic (such as place of residence) and demographic information (such as country of birth; duration of residency, households), and also about the trip characteristics of VFR travel parties who had visited them in the past twelve months (such as where they came from; friends or relatives, frequency, seasonality, duration of stay). The survey also asked about the activities (such as sightseeing) undertaken and attractions (such as visiting a beach and theme park) visited by their VFR travel groups. The survey included questions about specific hosting behaviours (such as recommendations; expenses; participations in travel activities; information sources). Questions relating to income, age and gender are not included in the survey as they are out of the scope of this research.

For validity and clarity of the questionnaire, a pre-test survey with the questionnaire was conducted on a short scale within the personal network of the primary researcher and supervisors. The objective of the pretest was to check that the questionnaire met the requirements (i.e. understand ability and appropriateness of the questions) to get the meaningful outcomes (Jennings, 2010). From the pre-test, some minor editing was incorporated in the final questionnaire prior to seeking ethics approval.

### **3.5.2 DATA COLLECTION:**

The online survey was circulated by using a commercial data firm's national database of local residents. Use of a commercial data firm's database prevents the risk of lower response rate and ensures an appropriate sample size. Randomly circulating online surveys is associated with the risk of getting lower response rate (Saunders et al., 2010), and this needed to be offset, particularly since this research was seeking to reach diverse groups of participants (both socially and geographically). A URL of the survey was created (<https://www.research.net/r/VFR-residents>) and then sent to the enlisted contacts within the commercial company's national database. Heterogeneous purposive sampling was adopted

for sending the survey invitation link through selecting participants from the database based on their country of birth (Australia or overseas). The survey continued to be sent out until sufficient numbers were received for conducting the necessary statistical analysis. The online survey started with providing a plain language information statement (PLIS) (see Appendix 2) to the participants outlining the objective of the survey, ethics approval information of the study, contact information of the researchers and helpline numbers. Only participants who selected the '*starting the survey*' button provided at the bottom of the front page of the online survey after reading the PLIS were allowed to start the survey.

A primary dataset of 515 responses was collected through the online survey. Data screening was undertaken within the primary dataset ensuring the accuracy and validity of the dataset (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The data screening involved checking and dealing with missing data and evaluating that enough valid or usable sample size has been achieved for conducting research. The next section discusses how the missing data was identified and dealt with.

### **3.5.3 MISSING DATA**

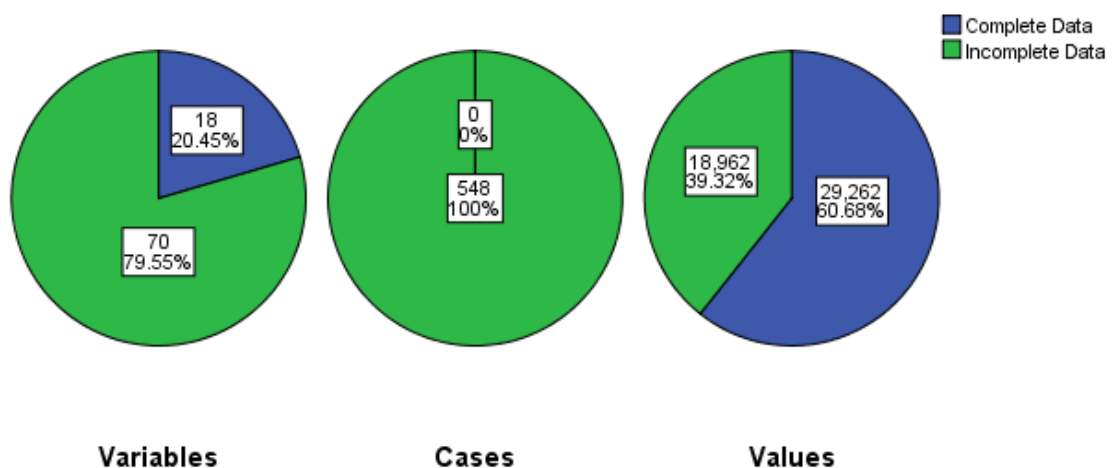
Missing data is a common occurrence in any primary data set, and can significantly impact the conclusions drawn unless appropriate measures are taken (such as list wise deletion; pairwise deletion; imputation of missing values). The collected raw data was exported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) - 21.0 software. Data imputation was then run to check missing responses or cases, and missing variables and values within responses. Figure 3.2 presents the summary of the data imputation results undertaken in the primary data set.

Figure 3.2 indicated that there were no missing cases as all the respondents included in the data set completed the survey, but there were missing variables and values within the



responses of 51 cases or respondents. As shown in Figure 3.2, the cases (n=51) of missing variables and values have had an average of 61% of their information missing, so made those responses invalid for further analysis. In this case, list wise deletion, i.e. excluding the case entirely from the dataset was deemed appropriate, as the most unbiased method (Allison, 2002; Horton & Kleinman, 2012; Lei, 2012). However, before omitting or excluding cases from a dataset, it is important to ensure that the exclusion would not lead to any potential bias or dilute the statistical strength of the dataset to conduct necessary statistical analysis (Schafer, 1997). In this regard the list wise deletion of 51 cases did not impact the overall capability of the dataset, because the removal represented only 9.8% of the whole data set and anything up to 10% of data set considered inconsequential for the overall capacity of a dataset (Bennett, 2001; Enders, 2010; Peng, Harwell, Liou, & Ehman, 2006). After the deletion of non-responses or incomplete responses from the dataset, the final usable sample size of the study is determined, which is presented in the following section.

**Figure 3.2: Overall Summary of Missing Values**



### 3.5.4 THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE FINAL SAMPLE SIZE

The accuracy of any findings largely dependent on gathering a sufficient or large enough sample size for the study (Saunders et al., 2009). In general, the larger the sample size, the more accurate the findings of the study is deemed to be as it provides more statistical power to the study (Button et al., 2013). Although there is no agreed threshold regarding minimum sample size, statisticians, suggests that for conducting necessary statistical analysis each sample category of a study should have at least sample size of 30 (Saunders et al., 2009; Stutely, 2003).

At the beginning of the survey, local residents were asked whether they had hosted any friends and/or relatives in the past twelve months. Table 3.2 presents the proportion of local resident hosts who responded positively or negatively to that question. The findings (Table 3.2) shows that larger proportion of local resident hosts were involved in hosting friends and/or relatives in their immediate past twelve months.

**Table 3.2: Propensity of Hosting VFRs among Local Residents**

<b>Hosted friends and/or relatives in the past 12 months</b>	<b>% (n=464)</b>
<b>Yes (VFR hosts)</b>	71.3 (n=331)
<b>No (Non-VFR hosts)</b>	28.7 (n=133)
<b>Total</b>	100.0

As this study focused on examining the role of VFR hosts (i.e. local residents who have hosted friends and relatives), the Non-VFR hosts (n=133) did not qualify to answer any further questions in the survey. Therefore, the final sample size of the study based on the number of VFR hosts (i.e. who have hosted VFRs in their immediate past twelve months) was N=331, which offered sufficient capacity for conducting necessary statistical analysis. Table 3.3 below shows the distribution of the 331 samples among the four categories of

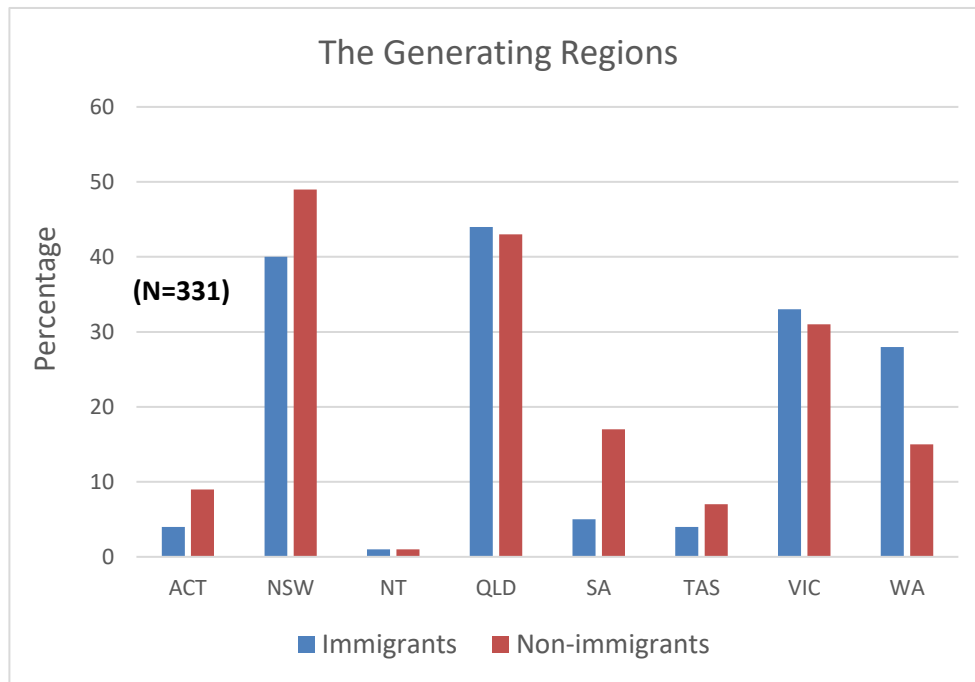
local resident VFR hosts examined in the study (i.e. immigrants and non-immigrants; regional and metropolitan; VFs and VRs)

**Table 3.3: Distribution of Hosting VFRs among Local Residents**

<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Immigrant hosts%</b>	<b>Non-Immigrant hosts%</b>
<b>Hosting VFs:</b>		
<b>Metropolitan</b>	53	60
<b>Regional</b>	25	21
<b>Hosting VRs:</b>		
<b>Metropolitan</b>	54	59
<b>Regional</b>	27	32
<b>Total</b>	100 (n= 159)	100 ( n= 172)

Moreover, as this study examines different category of hosts, it was also important to identify that each VFR hosts group was fairly represented within the final data set (N=331) for its validity. Figure 3.3 illustrates the generating regions of VFR hosts who participated in the study. The sample has well covered participants from all the States and Territories in Australia. The highest number of participants participated from New South Wales (NSW) (27%), closely followed by Queensland (QLD) (26%) and Victoria (VIC) (19%). The proportion of immigrants and non-immigrants hosts was fairly represented in different states and territories.

**Figure 3.3: The Generating Regions of VFR Hosts**



As this study intended to compare immigrant VFR hosts (i.e. born in overseas) and non-immigrant VFR hosts (i.e. born in Australia), it was critical that the final sample data set had a sufficient sample size (at least 30) of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts for carrying out the statistical comparison. In this regard, Table 3.4 presents the proportion of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts represented in the study. In the survey, local resident hosts were asked if they were born in Australia or how long they have been living in Australia (if they were born overseas). Based on their responses to that question, Table 3.4 disaggregated immigrant and non-immigrant local resident hosts based on their country of birth and shows an almost equal proportion of immigrant (48%) and non-immigrant (52%) VFR hosts in the final dataset. As indicated in Table 3.4, the proportion of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts was also large enough (more than 30) for carrying out statistical analysis. Table 3.3 also shows the sample distribution of immigrants based on their length of residency in Australia, and demonstrates that immigrants have been fairly represented in the categories considered for the study (i.e. 1-10 years and ten plus years).

Therefore, the final sample has fairly represented both immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts in the study.

**Table 3.4: Proportion of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant VFR hosts**

<b>Length of times in Australia (n=331)</b>	<b>Yes %</b>
<b>Born outside of Australia (n=159):</b>	48.0
<b>1-10 years (n=54)</b>	16.3%
<b>10 plus years (n=105)</b>	31.7%
<b>Born in Australia (n=172)</b>	52.0
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 3.5 shows the percentage of metropolitan and regional destinations that VFR hosts represent in the study. This categorisation of host's destination was important to clarify as this research wanted to compare VFR hosts in metropolitan and regional settings. To disaggregate the destinations between metropolitan and regional areas, respondents were asked to state the postcode of their residence in the survey. The postcodes were then categorised following the Remoteness Areas (RA) index of the 2011 Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS), which categorises the Australian geographical areas into major metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas based on accessibility to services and facilities (ABS, 2013).

As shown in Table 3.5, 70% (n=234) of the participants in the study were from metropolitan cities, and 30% of respondents (n=97) were from regional cities, representing a sufficient sample size for which is big enough for comparative analysis. Table 3.5 also demonstrates that proportion of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR host is fairly distributed between metropolitan and regional areas ensuring further validity of the final sample data set.

**Table 3.5: Proportion of Destination Regions**

Areas	Immigrants	Non-Immigrants
Major Metropolitan City	79.2% (n=126)	62.8% (n=108)
Regional	20.8% (n=33)	37.2% (n=64)
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0

Finally, Table 3.6 shows that the final sample data set has a sufficient number of VF and VR travel parties in order to make a comparison between them. As part of the survey, participants were asked whether in their past twelve months they had hosted any friends and/or relatives from outside the region (from overseas or more than 40 km away from the hosts' destination), and who stayed at least one night in the region. As outlined in Table 3.5, 64% (n=212) of local resident hosts who participated in the study have hosted both friends and relatives, while 20.2% (n=67) hosted only relatives, and 15.7% (n=52) hosted only friends in the past twelve months. Table 3.6 also shows a fairly evenly spread hosting role between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts and also between metropolitan and regional areas.

**Table 3.6: Proportion of Respondents Hosting Different Types of Visitors (in the past 12 months)**

Visitors	Immigrant hosts%	Non-Immigrant hosts%
Only Friends	15.7 (n= 25)	15.7 (n= 27)
Only Relatives	19.5 (n= 31)	20.9 (n= 36)
Both	64.8 (n= 103)	63.4 (n= 109)
<b>Total</b>	100 (n= 159)	100 ( n= 172)

### 3.5.5 THE ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

The data analysis commenced with descriptive analysis. As a part of descriptive analysis, frequency distribution analysis was conducted for reporting the number, proportion and percentage of individual variables relating to characteristics and behaviours of local

resident hosts and their VFR travel parties. Cross tabulation is used within the frequency distribution analysis when reporting the number, proportion and percentage of two variables at a time (e.g. between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts or VF vs. VR). The other statistics used for descriptive analysis are the measures of central tendency (such as mean (M), median (MD) and mode (MO)), measures of variability (such as range and standard deviation (SD)) and measures of shape (such as skewness and kurtosis).

As the descriptive analysis does not report the statistical significance of differences among variables, inferential analysis was conducted. Various inferential statistical techniques are available (such as T-tests, ANOVA, MANOVA and Chi-squared, etc.) for examining statistical significant difference between variables. The suitability of certain statistical techniques was decided based on the category and number of variables used in the analysis (Larcose & Larcose, 2014). An independent sample t-test was conducted when examining the relationship between a continuous dependent variable and an independent categorical variable having two within group categories. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used when dependent continuous variable was measured against an independent categorical variable that has two or more within group categories. However, Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used when multiple continuous variables were measured by a categorical variable (two or more groups) over conducting a series of tests on individual dependent variables (i.e. T-test and ANOVA) for avoiding possible confounding effects or biased associations (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010). Moreover, MANOVA is statistically more rigorous than a T-test and ANOVA when examining multiple continuous variables by a categorical variable (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010). Chi-squared tests were used when examining associations between two categorical variables (Corder & Foreman, 2014).

In testing the statistical significance of difference between variables (i.e. T-tests, ANOVA, MANOVA and Chi-squared), the testing variables are categorised between dependent and independent variables (Hair et al., 2010; Jennings, 2010). Table 3.7 shows the list of the dependent variables that were measured in testing for differences within the study. Table 3.7 describes the 34 individual items relating to various VFR travel related decisions and activities that were measured.

**Table 3.7: Dependent Measurement Variables**

<b>Outcome Variable</b>	<b>Individual Item</b>
<b>Choice of accommodation (continuous variable)</b>	No. of VF travel parties stay with the hosts; No. of VR travel parties stay with the hosts.
<b>Composition of travel parties (continuous variable)</b>	Group-size of the last travel parties; Group-size of the last VR travel party; No. of Adults in the last VF travel party; No. of Children in the last VF travel parties; No. of Adults in the last VR travel party; No. of Children in the last VR travel parties.
<b>Duration of stay (continuous variable)</b>	Duration of stay of the last VF travel party; Duration of stay of the last VR travel party
<b>No. of repeat visitation (continuous variable)</b>	No. of visit of the last VF travel party over the lifetime; No. of visit of the last VR travel party over the lifetime.
<b>Added expenses (continuous variable)</b>	Expenses incurred in hosting VFs: groceries, restaurant, recreational shopping, liquor, fuel, paid attraction, entertainment, others, total additional expenses; expenses for hosting VRs on groceries, restaurant, recreational shopping, liquor, fuel, paid attraction, entertainment, others, total additional expenses.
<b>Main Purpose of visit (categorical)</b>	VFR purpose of visit, Non-VFR purpose of visit

Table 3.8 summarises the four independent variables and their respective categorisation related to hosts' characteristics. These independent variables were used to analyse the dependent variables of the study as presented previously (Table 3.7).



**Table 3.8: Independent Variables**

Variable	Item Category
<b>Country of Birth (COB)</b>	Born in Australia and Born in Overseas
<b>Length of time in Australia</b>	1-10 years; 10+ years; Born in Australia
<b>Destination</b>	Metropolitan and Regional
<b>Relationship</b>	Visiting Friends (VFs) and Visiting Relatives (VRs)

Local resident hosts' evaluation of different information sources (i.e. personal experience, word-of-mouth, television, radio, newspaper, brochure, internet and visitor information centre) was collected through a four point scale ranging from '*not important source/not used*' to '*very important source*'. The data was initially analysed using factor analysis before examining the statistical significance of difference among different groups of VFR hosts. The purpose was to identify underlying dimensions or latent factors of the respondents' perceived evaluation of the information sources before testing for statistically significant differences, which was not possible to examine through simple descriptive analysis, such as the T-test, ANOVA or Chi-squared test (Hair, Black, & Babin, 2010).

In factor analysis the variables of interest are not classified between dependent and independent, rather the whole set of interdependent relationships among the variables is examined and represented in terms of a few underlying factors (Malhotra, Hall, Shaw, & Oppenheim, 2006). Exploratory factory analysis (EFA) was conducted in order to identify an appropriate factor structure. After that Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to measure the validity of the identified model. EFA was run using SPSS - 21.0 software and CFA was run using SPSS Amos-21.0 software.

Finally, association among the variables was tested. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine how much variation in trip characteristics within VFR travel can be

explained by variation in different characteristics of hosts. In this study, the four characteristics of hosts (as presented in Table 3.8) were the independent variables included in the regression model. The main purpose of visit of VFRs, the family and dwelling size of VFR hosts were also included in the regression model as control variables. Addition of control variables in regression model decrease standard errors and increase the robustness of analysis (Freedman, 2005). The categorical variables in the regression model were respecified into dummy variables following the convention for using a categorical variable as an independent estimator in the regression analysis (Wooldridge, 2015). Dummy variable takes the value of ‘0’ and ‘1’ indicating the absence and presence of a particular condition or effect of a categorical variable, which may be expected to influence the outcome (Draper & Smith, 1998). Table 3.9 presents and described the dummy variables used in the regression analysis.

**Table 3.9: Dummy Variables Used to Examine Influence of VFR Hosts**

<b>Dummy Variable</b>	<b>Description of the variable and its value rules</b>
<b>Country of Birth</b>	The dummy variable of country of birth denotes the value of 1 if the local residents was born in Australia, otherwise it takes the value of 0.
<b>Immigration Status</b>	The dummy variable of country of birth denotes the value of 1 if the local residents had been in Australia for 1-10 years, otherwise it takes the value of 0.
<b>Destination</b>	The dummy variable of destination represents the value of 1 if the local residents were living in a metropolitan areas, otherwise it takes the value of 0.
<b>Relationship Status</b>	The dummy variable of relationship status denotes the value of 1 if the local residents were being visited by friends, otherwise it takes the value of 0.
<b>Main Purpose of Visit</b>	The dummy variable of main purpose of visit denotes the value of 1 if travel parties had non-VFR purpose of visit, otherwise it takes the value of 0.

The following estimation models were developed and tested in this study through regression analysis in order to examine the impact of hosts on decisions and activities

within VFR travel: group size, duration of stay, number of repeat visits, total expenses, number of VFR travel parties staying with hosts and number of VFR travel parties stay in the commercial accommodation.

**Model 1:**

$$\text{Group Size} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

**Model 2:**

$$\text{Duration of stay} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

**Model 3:**

$$\text{No. of Repeat Visits} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

**Model 4:**

$$\text{Total Expenditure} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_7 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

**Model 5:**

$$\text{No. of VFR Travel Parties Staying With Host} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

**Model 6:**

$$\text{No. of VFR Travel Parties Stay in the Commercial Accommodation} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

Where:  $\beta_0$  = Constant terms

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7$  = Regression coefficients

$\varepsilon$  = Error Term

### **3.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND EXECUTION: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative research was conducted through in-depth interviews with local residents to fulfil the Research Objective Seven. The in-depth interviews allowed local resident hosts to express their thoughts in their own words and to use their own perceived associations regarding hosting VFRs (Kingsley, Phillips, Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2010; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Qualitative data captured details about behaviours and activities of local resident hosts of VFRs and how they perceive the whole hosting experience.

#### **3.6.1 INTERVIEW STRUCTURE**

In-depth interviews can be conducted face-to-face with the participants, over the telephone and also through online interview. For this study, telephone interview was conducted as it provides a greater cost benefit, coverage and privacy over face-to-face and online interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, the interviews were semi-structured involving a list of possible questions based on the research objectives, which were used as hints during the interview (Appendix 4).

A semi-structured interview helped the researchers to cover all the important questions and stay on the topic during the interview (Gummesson, 2000). Participants were asked to provide details of visitors they have hosted in the past 12 months and their experience of hosting. The focus of the questions was to examine the nature of the social interaction between hosts and their VFRs, via 14 core questions. Specifically, participants were asked to identify what type of visitor each travel party composed (i.e. friend or relative) and what generating region each travel party came from. If the participants were not born in Australia, they were asked if any of their visitors had come from their previous homeland.

### **3.6.2 DATA COLLECTION**

For this present study, telephone interviews were conducted in three contrasting destinations in Australia's state of Victoria (one metropolitan: Melbourne, and two regional: Ballarat and Geelong). To recruit potential participants from the selected destinations, key staff at the DMOs at the three localities (Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong) as well as local government associations (councils) in those cities were contacted to seek assistance with promoting the study. Those organisations were requested if they could utilise their membership databases, newsletters, flyers and social media platforms to invite local people to participate in the study. From those avenues, potential participants expressing interest in participating in the research were sourced. The plain language information statement (PLIS) that was used informing about the research to the potential participants is provided in Appendix 3.

Telephone interviews were conducted during a three month period from August 2016 to October 2016 until saturation. Saturation in this context means that the incremental contribution of each additional interview reveals little or no additional information (Neuman, 2011). Heterogeneous purposive sampling was employed as this research intended to study the differences in hosting between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents. A total of 34 participants were interviewed across the three different regions and interviews typically lasted around 45 minutes. Each region included a minimum of 10 participants. The full profile of the participants who participated in the interviews is provided in Table 3.10. As indicated in Table 3.10, the sample comprised 18 female and 16 male participants and included 10 migrant local resident hosts. The sample also provided a good balance of length of residency in the localities, and varied from four months to in excess of 50 years.

**Table 3.10: Interview Participant Profile**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Duration of Residence</b>	<b>COB</b>
<b>G1</b>	Female	55 years	Australia
<b>G2</b>	Male	18 years	Australia
<b>G3</b>	Male	40 years	Australia
<b>G4</b>	Male	7 years	Australia
<b>G5</b>	Female	9 years	Australia
<b>G6</b>	Male	10 years	Australia
<b>G7</b>	Female	7 years	Australia
<b>G8</b>	Male	15 years	Australia
<b>G9</b>	Female	6 years	Australia
<b>G10</b>	Female	36 years	Australia
<b>G11</b>	Female	28 years	Scotland
<b>G12</b>	Male	7 years	Australia
<b>G13</b>	Female	5 years	Australia
<b>G14</b>	Male	5 years	USA
<b>B1</b>	Female	4 months	Australia
<b>B2</b>	Female	6 years	Poland
<b>B3</b>	Male	6 years	Australia
<b>B4</b>	Female	7 years	Australia
<b>B5</b>	Male	2 years	Australia
<b>B6</b>	Male	3 years	Bangladesh
<b>B7</b>	Male	2 years	Australia
<b>B8</b>	Male	6.5 years	UK
<b>B9</b>	Female	1 years	Poland
<b>B10</b>	Female	16 years	UK
<b>M1</b>	Male	64 years	Australia
<b>M2</b>	Female	68 years	Australia
<b>M3</b>	Male	66 years	Australia
<b>M4</b>	Male	50+ years	Australia
<b>M5</b>	Female	13 years	UK
<b>M6</b>	Female	2 years	Taiwan
<b>M7</b>	Female	16 years	Japan
<b>M8</b>	Female	34 years	Australia
<b>M9</b>	Male	8 years	Australia
<b>M10</b>	Female	45 years	Australia

Note: G= Geelong; B= Ballarat; M= Melbourne

Written notes were taken during the interviews and were read back to the interviewees after the completion of each interview, with amendments made if required to ensure the accuracy

of data. This technique of qualitative data recording has been successfully employed in previous VFR research (e.g. Backer, 2010c; Backer and Morrison, 2015).

### **3.6.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

There is no standardised procedure for analysing qualitative data and it is commonly analysed through summarising, grouping and restructuring in order to conceptualise the inner meaning of non-numeric responses (Saunders et al., 2009). Given the exploratory nature of this study, transcripts of the in-depth interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, to arrange data into different groups based on common themes indicated by the social situation analysis framework (Neuman, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). Although quantification is not an objective of thematic analysis, number counts can be used in order to represent the occurrence of themes within the qualitative data (Saunders et al., 2009). The analysis was conducted manually. Consideration was given to using software such as NVivo or ATLAS, which offers benefits such as saving time and can be particularly beneficial for handling a large-scale database. However, the data was manually analysed in order to gain deeper insights. The participant name associated with each transcript was coded to ensure anonymity of the participant (e.g. B1 for the first person interviewed in Ballarat, G2 for the second person in Geelong and M3 for the third person interviewed in Melbourne) to avoid possible bias during analysis.

## **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics approval was sought as this research derived data from the primary sources. The online surveys and in-depth interviews undertaken for collecting data (i.e. the survey and interview questionnaire) followed the ethics guidelines of the Federation University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (FedUni, 2015). The questions complied with the standard requirements of the ethics committee and confirmed that no inappropriate or

confronting questions were asked. The copy of the ethics approval from the Federation University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for this research is attached in Appendix 5.

The involvement of the participants was voluntary, and their consent was obtained before the survey and interview. The objective of the research was communicated plainly and participants were advised that they could withdraw at any time by discontinuing completion of the survey or interview. The privacy of the collected data and confidentiality of all participants was preserved throughout the research process. Once analysed, the data were stored and remain in a secure database at the Federation Business School and access to the data was limited to the researcher only.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research method for the study based on the philosophical principles and methodological approach. It also justified the sample for the study collected through the online survey and in-depth interviews and how the data was analysed to satisfy the research objective three to seven. The next chapter reports the results of the online survey.



## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE ONLINE SURVEY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As discussed in the previous chapter a national online survey was conducted in order to address Research Objectives Three to Six. The findings of the quantitative research are presented in the following two chapters; this chapter reports the descriptive results obtained through the online survey while Chapter 5 reports on the statistical significance of the descriptive results presented in this chapter. In the survey, the participant VFR hosts were asked to respond regarding the individual trip characteristics and trip-related decisions and activities of their VFRs who had visited them in the immediate past twelve months. The respondents were also asked about their decisions and the activities they had undertaken to host their VFRs (See Appendix 1 for the full survey questionnaire).

This chapter starts by clarifying the data screening process through which the quantitative dataset of the study was prepared for statistical analysis (Section 4.2). Then the differences in attributes of local resident VFR hosts who participated in the study is presented (Section 4.3). The descriptive analysis of the responses related to the individual trip characteristics of the VFR travel parties that visited the participant VFR hosts is presented in Section 4.4. The next section presents the general findings regarding the decisions and activities of VFR hosts and their VFRs (Section 4.5), followed by a conclusion of this chapter (Section 4.6).

### **4.2 DATA SCREENING & ADJUSTMENTS**

To avoid biased results, the normality of distribution of continuous data variables in the dataset was assessed. Skewness and kurtosis values of data between -1 to +1 are normally distributed and likely to have no potential outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Outliers are extreme scores or values in the datasets that are distant from other values (Tabachnick

& Fidell, 2007). The assessment of skewness and kurtosis values of continuous variables in the dataset identified that there was non-normal distribution of data within the continuous variables. Therefore, necessary statistical adjustments were undertaken on the variables containing non-normal data to improve the normality of distribution.

Table 4.1 presents descriptive statistics and distributional properties of raw values relating to the choice of accommodation of VFR travel parties. Table 4.1 shows that normality of distribution was violated in all the four variables as the skewness and kurtosis values did not fall within the range of -1 to +1. Therefore, logarithmic adjustment (see Log10 values) was conducted on those variables, and after that, the distributional properties showed normal distribution.

**Table 4.1: Choice of Accommodation: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Variables	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
# Stayed with Hosts: VFs	1.30	0.07	1.88	0.13	5.41	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.29</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.28</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.67</i>	<i>0.26</i>
# Stayed with Hosts: VRs	2.02	0.11	2.35	0.13	7.58	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.40</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.19</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.03</i>	<i>0.26</i>
# Commercial Accommodation: VFs	0.72	0.07	3.79	0.13	22.45	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.16</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>1.24</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.92</i>	<i>0.26</i>
# Commercial Accommodation: VRs	0.69	0.07	3.23	0.13	13.94	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>1.44</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>1.26</i>	<i>0.26</i>

*SE= Standard Error*

Table 4.2 shows that all the variables related to travel party size were also not normally distributed. As a result, log10 adjustments were undertaken.

**Table 4.2: Travel Party Size: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Variables	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>Group Size: VFs</b>	2.19	0.12	3.11	0.13	14.89	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.41</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.05</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>No. of Adults: VFs</b>	1.65	0.08	3.13	0.13	15.91	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.36</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.30</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>No. of Children: VFs</b>	0.53	0.05	2.35	0.13	6.07	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>1.47</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.88</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Group Size: VRs</b>	2.20	0.10	1.63	0.13	4.53	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.43</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.20</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.29</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>No. of Adults: VRs</b>	1.63	0.06	1.48	0.13	5.26	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.37</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.42</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.37</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>No. of Children: VRs</b>	0.56	0.05	2.05	0.13	4.43	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>1.30</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.31</i>	<i>0.26</i>

SE= Standard Error

The variables related to the duration of stay of VFRs were also adjusted through log10 as demonstrated in the following Table 4.3. After the adjustment, the properties of the data showed normal distribution.

**Table 4.3: Duration of Stay: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Variables	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>VF Travel Parties</b>	4.02	0.27	2.11	0.13	4.48	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.53</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.57</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>VR Travel Parties</b>	5.28	0.31	1.65	0.13	2.12	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.43</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.20</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.29</i>	<i>0.26</i>

SE= Standard Error

Table 4.4 shows that data relating to the number of repeat visits of VFs were not normally distributed, whereas the data relating to VRs were normally distributed. Therefore, the log10 adjustment was conducted on the data of VFs and then transformed into normal data.

**Table 4.4: Repeat Visitation: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Variables	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>No. of Previous Visit: VFs</b>	3.09	0.21	1.22	0.13	0.39	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.40</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.36</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.43</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>No. of Previous Visit: VRs</b>	4.22	0.25	0.88	0.13	-0.61	0.26

SE= Standard Error

The data of the individual areas of expenses by hosts with VF travel parties also showed non-normal distribution (Table 4.5). Therefore, Log10 adjustments were conducted on those non-normal values related to expenses to transform into normal.

**Table 4.5: Expenses with VF Parties: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Areas of expenses	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>Groceries: VFS</b>	107.85	11.92	5.61	0.13	40.97	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	1.33	0.05	-0.34	0.13	-1.34	0.26
<b>Recreational Shopping: VFs</b>	62.27	8.98	6.75	0.13	65.87	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.74	0.05	0.75	0.13	-1.16	0.26
<b>Restaurant/Cafes: VFs</b>	110.28	11.14	4.45	0.13	28.47	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	1.24	0.05	-0.15	0.13	-1.65	0.26
<b>Liquor: VFs</b>	60.28	9.47	9.03	0.13	97.10	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.97	0.05	0.14	0.13	-1.57	0.26
<b>Fuel: VFs</b>	42.71	3.92	2.79	0.13	9.79	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.91	0.05	0.18	0.13	-1.65	0.26
<b>Visiting Paid Attractions: VFs</b>	36.63	5.91	5.45	0.13	37.55	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.49	0.04	1.35	0.13	0.10	0.26
<b>Entertainments: VFs</b>	25.97	4.47	6.83	0.13	67.18	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.42	0.04	1.49	0.13	0.54	0.26
<b>Others: VFs</b>	15.38	3.50	5.70	0.13	35.91	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	0.22	0.03	2.68	0.13	5.76	0.26
<b>Total Expenses: VFs</b>	461.10	46.13	5.89	0.13	54.29	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	1.91	0.06	-0.76	0.13	-0.84	0.26

SE= Standard Error

Table 4.6 shows that the distribution of data in the individual areas of expenses by the hosts with VR travel parties was also non-normal. Therefore, Log10 adjustments were undertaken on the raw values of those variables to convert those data into normally-distributed.

**Table 4.6: Expenses with VR Parties: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional properties**

Variables	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>Groceries: VRs</b>	155.35	21.94	7.69	0.13	76.72	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>1.45</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>-0.42</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.12</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Recreational Shopping: VRs</b>	64.91	12.17	9.49	0.13	111.22	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.72</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>0.78</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.10</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Restaurant/Cafes: VRs</b>	115.19	12.40	7.36	0.13	82.92	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>1.28</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>-0.21</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.63</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Liquor: VRs</b>	52.97	7.46	9.81	0.13	131.04	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.91</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>0.24</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.62</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Fuel: VRs</b>	63.40	7.50	5.71	0.13	46.04	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>1.04</i>	<i>0.05</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-1.54</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Visiting Paid Attractions: VRs</b>	43.95	11.50	11.20	0.13	143.31	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.48</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>1.42</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.43</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Entertainments: VRs</b>	27.95	6.74	12.99	0.13	203.89	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>1.50</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.60</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Others: VRs</b>	28.93	8.03	9.56	0.13	111.61	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>0.26</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>2.52</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>4.90</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Total Expenses: VRs</b>	552.55	69.37	8.83	0.13	101.73	0.26
<i>Log10</i>	<i>2.00</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>-0.85</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>-0.57</i>	<i>0.26</i>

SE= Standard Error

Table 4.7 below presents the descriptive statistics and distributional properties of the data related to importance (on a 4 point scale) of the information sources attributed by the respondents. Table 4.7 shows that all the variables were normally distributed except the personal experience. Log10 was initially conducted on personal experience data, but the data remained non-normal. Squared adjustments were then used resulting normal distribution of the data.

**Table 4.7: Importance of Information Sources: Descriptive Statistics and Distributional Properties**

Information Sources	Mean		Skew		Kurt	
	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE	Statistic	SE
<b>Personal Experience</b>	3.60	0.03	-1.91	0.13	3.36	0.26
<i>squared</i>	<i>13.50</i>	<i>0.22</i>	<i>-1.41</i>	<i>0.13</i>	<i>0.82</i>	<i>0.26</i>
<b>Word –of- mouth</b>	3.25	0.04	-0.94	0.13	0.70	0.26
<b>Television</b>	2.37	0.04	0.04	0.13	0.79	0.26
<b>Radio</b>	2.20	0.04	0.22	0.13	-0.78	0.26
<b>Newspaper</b>	2.35	0.05	0.10	0.13	-0.88	0.26
<b>Brochure</b>	2.47	0.05	-0.04	0.13	-0.80	0.26
<b>Internet</b>	3.12	0.05	-0.84	0.13	-0.11	0.26
<b>Information Centre</b>	2.51	0.05	-0.09	0.13	-1.05	0.26

SE= Standard Error

The analysis undertaken in this study adopted the 95% confidence interval convention, which allows a 0.05 margin of error estimates. The common choices for the confidence interval are 0.90, 0.95, and 0.99. While the 0.99 confidence interval is more appropriate for smaller sample sizes, the 0.95 confidence interval is more commonly used with larger sample sizes and with statistically normally distributed data (Steiger, 2004). Therefore, a 95% confidence interval was deemed appropriate for this study, given the larger sample size (as clarified in Section 3.5.2) and normal distribution of data (as presented in Table 4.1-4.7) of this study.


### **4.3 PARTICIPANT VFR HOSTS' CHARACTERISTICS**

This section reports the general findings regarding the participants' characteristics of this study. Local residents who participated in the online survey on average hosted *five* travel parties in the immediate past twelve months, which resulted in a total of *1571* VFR travel parties visiting *331* participants of the study.

#### **4.3.1 TYPES OF VFR HOSTS**

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of different types of VFR hosts who participated in the study. As previously noted, this study included the full range of VFR hosts based on the 'VFR Travel Host Definitional Model'. Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of the respondents in this study were PVFR hosts (n = 231; 70%) followed by CVFR hosts (n = 63; 19%) and EVFR hosts (n = 37; 11%).

**Figure 4.1: Distributional of Data based on the VFR Travel Hosts Definitional Model**

	Accommodation: Host's home	Accommodation: Commercial
Purpose of Visit for visitor: VFR	<b>n = 231</b> <b>(70%)</b> PVFR host	<b>n = 63</b> <b>(19%)</b> CVFR host
Purpose of Visit for Visitor: NON-VFR	<b>n = 37</b> <b>(11%)</b> EVFR host	 non-VFR host

#### **4.3.2 HOSTING CAPACITY OF VFR HOSTS**

Table 4.8 summarises the hosting capacity of the local resident participants of the survey based on the number of family members living in their home and the number of beds their current home have. As indicated in Table 4.8, family size of one to three people was most common irrespective of immigrant and non-immigrant host category. However, the number of lone households was higher in non-immigrants category (15%) than that of immigrants (8%).

In terms of accommodation capacity, Table 4.8 demonstrates that the majority of VFR hosts' accommodation fell within the range of one to three beds. However, for those who offered more than three beds the percentage of non-immigrant (45%) VFR hosts was higher than immigrants (39%). So, non-immigrant VFR hosts offered a greater capacity of hosting VFRs in their home than that of immigrant hosts.

**Table 4.8: Hosting Capacity (%)**

Characteristics	VFR Hosts Type	
	Immigrant % (n=159)	Non-immigrant % (n=172)
<b>Family Members</b>		
<b>1 to 3</b>	76.1 (n=121)	76.2 (n=131)
<b>4 to 6</b>	22.0 (n=35)	21.5 (n=37)
<b>7 to 9</b>	1.3 (n=2)	2.3 (n=3)
<b>10 to 12</b>	.6 (n=1)	-
<b>Number of Beds</b>		
<b>1 to 3</b>	61.0 (n=97)	55.2 (n=95)
<b>4 to 6</b>	39.0 (n=62)	43.6 (n=75)
<b>6+</b>	-	1.2 (n=2)

## 4.4 GENERAL FINDINGS: INDIVIDUAL TRIP CHARACTERISTICS OF VFRs

This section presents the general findings of the online survey (See Appendix 1 for the full survey questionnaire) based on the responses provided by the local resident participants regarding the individual trip characteristics of their recent VFR travel parties. Local resident VFR hosts responded to different aspects of their recent travel parties, and findings are presented in the following sections.

### 4.4.1 SEASONALITY

The local residents were asked to estimate the visiting period of their most recent group of VFRs in order to understand the seasonality of VFR travel. Table 4.9 presents the proportion of visits that took place in the past twelve months between VF and VR travel parties, and Figure 4.2 visually represented the findings of seasonality as presented in Table 4.9 for better understanding.

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the flow of VFR travel was sustained all year round but there were some specific periods where the number of VFRs was higher, namely holidays (e.g. school holidays), and festivities (e.g. Easter and Christmas). These are the peak times of year when friends and relatives can be expected to visit, and add extra flow to the year-long trend of visiting friends and relatives. Interestingly, relatives visited more in the second half



of the year, which might be associated with the Christmas period which is more of a family event. The number of visits from friends was higher during the first half of the year.

**Table 4.9: Months of VFR Travel Parties' Visit between VF and VR Travel Parties (%)**

Months	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
January	16	6.1	12	4.3
February	22	8.3	17	6.1
March	28	10.6	22	7.9
April	28	10.6	22	7.9
May	23	8.7	14	5.0
June	22	8.3	22	7.9
July	26	9.8	30	10.8
August	29	11.0	37	13.3
September	42	15.9	58	20.8
October	17	6.4	26	9.3
November	2	.8	5	1.8
December	9	3.4	14	5.0

**Figure 4.2: Seasonality of VFR Travel Parties between VF and VR**

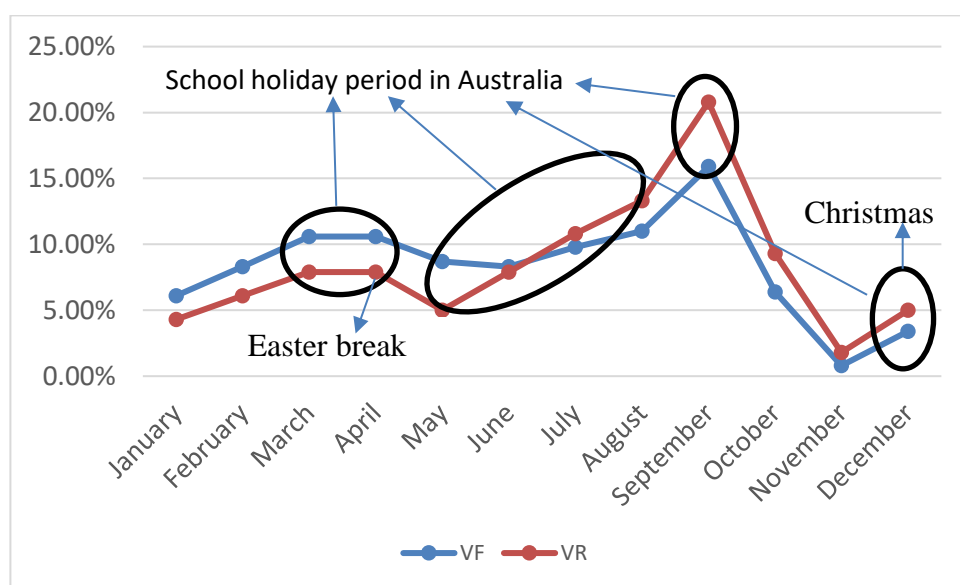
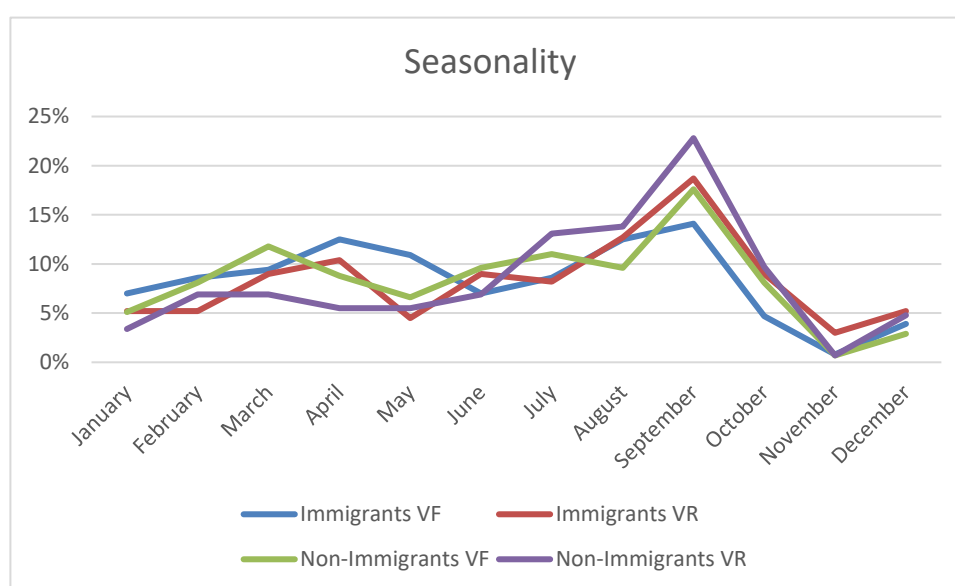


Table 4.10 and Figure 4.3 demonstrated the seasonality of immigrant and non-immigrant host groups. As shown in Figure 4.3, the seasonality pattern for VFRs between immigrant and non-immigrant host groups was similar.

**Table 4.10: The Seasonality between Immigrants and Non-immigrants Categories (%)**

Months	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
January	9	7.0	7	5.2	7	5.1	5	3.4
February	11	8.6	7	5.2	11	8.1	10	6.9
March	12	9.4	12	9.0	16	11.8	10	6.9
April	16	12.5	14	10.4	12	8.8	8	5.5
May	14	10.9	6	4.5	9	6.6	8	5.5
June	9	7.0	12	9.0	13	9.6	10	6.9
July	11	8.6	11	8.2	15	11.0	19	13.1
August	16	12.5	17	12.7	13	9.6	20	13.8
September	18	14.1	25	18.7	24	17.6	33	22.8
October	6	4.7	12	9.0	11	8.1	14	9.7
November	1	.8	4	3.0	1	.7	1	.7
December	5	3.9	7	5.2	4	2.9	7	4.8

**Figure 4.3: Seasonality of VFR Travel Parties Hosted between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts**

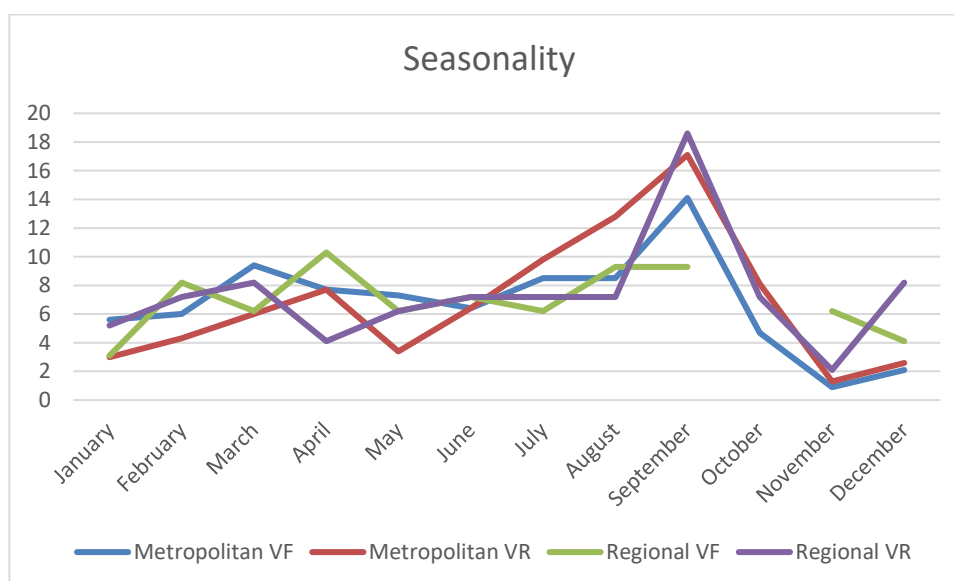


Moreover, Table 4.11 and Figure 4.4 below illustrates that the seasonality pattern in the metropolitan and regional areas was also similar. So, overall the findings pertaining to seasonality are consistent across the three categories with a small variation between the preference of visits between friends and relatives.

**Table 4.11: The Seasonality between Metropolitan and Regional Categories (%)**

Months	Metropolitan Cities				Regional Cities			
	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
January	13	5.6	7	3.0	3	3.1	5	5.2
February	14	6.0	10	4.3	8	8.2	7	7.2
March	22	9.4	14	6.0	6	6.2	8	8.2
April	18	7.7	18	7.7	10	10.3	4	4.1
May	17	7.3	8	3.4	6	6.2	6	6.2
June	15	6.4	15	6.4	7	7.2	7	7.2
July	20	8.5	23	9.8	6	6.2	7	7.2
August	20	8.5	30	12.8	9	9.3	7	7.2
September	33	14.1	40	17.1	9	9.3	18	18.6
October	11	4.7	19	8.1	-		7	7.2
November	2	.9	3	1.3	6	6.2	2	2.1
December	5	2.1	6	2.6	4	4.1	8	8.2

**Figure 4.4: Seasonality of VFR Travel Parties Hosted between Metropolitan and Regional Destinations**



#### 4.4.2 GENERATING REGION OF VFRs

The respondents were asked about the origin of their VFRs in order to understand the proportion of domestic and international VFRs. As indicated in Table 4.12 the majority (73%) of VFRs in this study were domestic visitors; predominantly from NSW, followed by QLD and VIC. Immigrant VFR hosts understandably hosted more visitors from abroad

(44%) than non-immigrants (11%); especially higher number of relatives from abroad (46 %) than that of friends (40%).

**Table 4.12: Generating Regions of VFRs between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

VFRs	Domestic (States or Territories in Australia)								International
	ACT %	NSW %	NT %	QLD %	SA %	Tas %	VIC %	WA %	%
VF									
Immigrants	-	16.4	-	13.3	7.0	.8	12.5	10.2	39.8
Non-immigrants	2.9	25.7	1.5	22.1	5.1	5.9	17.6	6.6	12.5
VR									
Immigrants	1.5	14.9	-	7.5	3.0	3.0	14.2	9.7	46.3
Non-immigrants	4.1	26.2	1.4	24.8	4.8	5.5	18.6	5.5	9.0

The table below (Table 4.13), on the other hand, shows differences in generating regions of VFRs visiting metropolitan and regional areas. The number of international VFRs was higher in metropolitan areas (43%) and inclined more towards VR travel parties (35%). By contrast, the number of domestic visitors was higher in regional areas, which was inclined more towards VF travel parties (12%).

**Table 4.13: Generating Regions of VFRs Visiting Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

VFRs	Domestic (States or Territories in Australia)								International%
	ACT %	NSW %	NT %	QLD %	SA %	Tas %	VIC %	WA %	
VF									
Metropolitan	1.6	20.5	-	16.3	6.8	2.6	13.7	6.8	31.6
Regional	1.4	23.0	2.7	21.6	4.1	5.4	18.9	12.2	10.8
VR									
Metropolitan	3.1	19.7	0.5	11.9	4.7	3.6	14.5	7.3	34.7
Regional	2.3	23.3	1.2	26.7	2.3	5.8	20.9	8.1	9.3

#### 4.4.3 ACCOMMODATION USED BY VFRs

In the survey, respondents were asked to select the number of travel parties who either stayed with them or stayed in commercial accommodation. The purpose was to capture the proportion of use of hosts' accommodation versus commercial accommodation by VFRs.

Table 4.14 presents the findings of accommodation where VFRs stayed, disaggregating between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts.

Table 4.14 demonstrated that the number of VFRs who stayed in their host's accommodation was higher than VFRs who stayed in the commercial accommodation. Immigrant (77%) and non-immigrant (72%) VFR hosts both reported that majority of their VFRs stayed in their home, while the percentage was higher with immigrants. However, a higher percentage (83%) of VR travel parties stayed in hosts' accommodation than VF travel parties (67%). In contrast, the proportion of VFs was higher (38%), as compared to VRs (33%) who stayed in the commercial accommodation.

**Table 4.14: Number of Different Travel Parties Based on Choice of Accommodation (%)**

Number of Groups	Immigrant %				Non-immigrant %			
	VF %		VR %		VF %		VR %	
	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial
None	30.8	60.4	15.7	67.3	36.0	64.0	19.2	66.9
One	35.8	25.2	34.6	16.4	26.2	14.5	28.5	15.7
Two	22.0	6.9	25.8	8.2	25.0	15.7	22.7	9.9
Three	1.3	3.1	9.4	1.9	5.2	2.9	14.5	2.9
Four	6.9	1.9	6.9	4.4	3.5	2.3	6.4	2.9
Five	1.3	-	3.1	-	2.3	-	2.3	1.2
Six or more	1.9	2.5	4.4	1.8	1.8	.6	6.4	.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
M (SD)	1.29 (1.36)	0.73 (1.37)	1.94 (1.86)	0.72 (1.54)	1.31 (1.51)	0.70 (1.32)	2.09 (2.23)	0.66 (1.22)

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation;*

Table 4.15 reports the differences in choice of accommodation of VFRs who visited metropolitan and regional areas. Similar to immigrants and non-immigrant hosts (as presented in Table 4.14), the majority of VFRs stayed with their hosts in both metropolitan (76%) and regional areas (71%), though the percentage was higher in the metropolitan areas. In the metropolitan areas, the number of VFs was higher (41%) than VRs (33%) among those who stayed in commercial accommodation. However, in the regional areas, the

percentage of VRs (34%) who stayed in commercial accommodation was higher than the VFs (31%).

**Table 4.15: Number of Different Travel Parties Based on Choice of Accommodation (%)**

Number of groups	Metropolitan %				Regional %			
	VF %		VR %		VF %		VR %	
	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial	Home	Commercial
None	32.5	59.4	15.4	67.5	36.1	69.1	22.7	66.0
One	31.6	23.1	33.3	17.1	28.9	11.3	26.8	13.4
Two	24.4	11.5	26.5	9.0	21.6	11.3	18.6	9.3
Three	2.6	3.0	10.7	1.7	5.2	3.1	15.5	4.1
Four	5.6	2.1	7.3	3.0	4.1	2.1	5.2	5.2
Five	1.7	-	2.1	0.9	2.1	-	4.1	-
Six or more	1.6	0.9	4.7	0.8	2	3.1	7.1	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
M (SD)	1.30 (1.41)	0.68 (1.06)	2.02 (2.09)	0.63 (1.26)	1.29 (1.52)	0.80 (1.85)	2.02 (2.01)	0.83 (1.65)

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation*

#### **4.4.4 GROUP COMPOSITIONS OF VFR TRAVEL PARTIES/ TRAVEL PARTY SIZE**

This section presents local residents' responses on group composition of VFR travel parties that they hosted (i.e. the number of adults and children within the last VFR travel parties visited them). Table 4.16 presents the result for immigrant and non-immigrant host groups. As indicated in Table 4.16, the majority of the travel parties travelled without children (65%) and commonly comprised two adults (53%). However, larger travel parties comprising both adults and children were hosted more by immigrant (13%) than the non-immigrant (11%) hosts and was higher with VR travel parties (90%) than with VF (87%).

**Table 4.16: Group Compositions of Travel Parties between Immigrants and Non-immigrants (%)**

Composition	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	Type of Travel Party				Type of Travel Party			
No. of Adults	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR	%
0	1	.8	1	.7	3	2.2	1	.7
1	34	26.6	46	34.3	44	32.4	46	31.7
2	82	64.1	66	49.3	63	46.3	77	53.1
3	3	2.3	11	8.2	12	8.8	11	7.6
4	4	3.1	8	6.0	5	3.7	5	3.4
5 or more	4	3.1	2	1.5	9	6.6	5	3.4
<b>No. of Children</b>								
0	85	66.4	89	66.4	88	64.7	90	62.1
1	19	14.8	21	15.7	19	14.0	24	16.6
2	16	12.5	16	11.9	19	14.0	15	10.3
3	5	3.9	6	4.5	5	3.7	13	9.0
4	2	1.6	1	.7	1	.7	1	.7
5 or more	1	.8	1	.7	4	2.9	2	1.3

The next table (Table 4.17) reports the result of group composition of VFR travel parties visiting metropolitan and regional areas. Table 4.17 also demonstrated that the majority of travel parties travelled without children (70%) and comprised of only two adults (53%). However, in the metropolitan areas, the number of travel parties that included both adults and children was higher among VR travel parties (74%) but higher with VF travel parties in regional areas (74%).

**Table 4.17: Group Compositions of Travel Parties between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

Composition	Metropolitan				Regional			
	Type of Travel Party				Type of Travel Party			
No. of Adults	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF	%	VR	%
0	47	20.1	43	18.4	24	24.7	11	11.3
1	60	25.6	66	28.2	18	18.6	26	26.8
2	104	44.4	100	42.7	41	42.3	43	44.3
3	8	3.4	14	6.0	7	7.2	8	8.2
4	7	3.0	6	2.6	2	2.1	7	7.2
5 or more	8	3.5	5	2.1	5	5.1	2	2.2
<b>No. of Children</b>								
0	168	71.8	173	73.9	72	74.2	58	59.8
1	28	12.0	31	13.2	10	10.3	14	14.4
2	26	11.1	20	8.5	9	9.3	11	11.3
3	7	3.0	9	3.8	3	3.1	10	10.3

4	3	1.3	1	0.4	-	-	1	1.0
5 or more	2	0.9	-	-	3	3.1	3	3.2

Existing literature has indicated differences in group size between VFR travel parties staying in hosts' accommodation and commercial accommodation (Backer, 2010a; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995). For this reason, the group composition of VFR travel parties has been further analysed based on their use of accommodation.

Table 4.18 below depicts the group composition of VFR travel parties staying in accommodation provided by the hosts. Overall, Table 4.18 also reported the higher proportion of groups comprised two adults (52%). However, travel parties comprising two adults was higher among VR travel parties that visited the immigrant hosts (56%). The larger travel parties comprising both adults and children was higher among VF travel parties hosted by the non-immigrant hosts (64%).

**Table 4.18: Group Compositions of Travel Parties Staying with Hosts (%)**

Composition	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	Type of Travel party				Type of Travel party			
No. of Adults	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
0	0	0	1	.8	3	2.6	1	.8
1	30	28.8	43	35.8	40	34.5	43	34.1
2	65	62.5	60	50.0	51	44.0	65	51.6
3	2	1.9	9	7.5	10	8.6	9	7.1
4	4	3.8	6	5.0	4	3.4	3	2.4
No. of Children								
0	68	65.4	81	67.5	76	65.5	78	61.9
1	15	14.4	18	15.0	16	13.8	22	17.5
2	13	12.5	14	11.7	16	13.8	13	10.3
3	5	4.8	6	5.0	5	4.3	10	7.9
4	2	1.9	1	.8	1	.9	1	.8
5 or more	1	1.0	0	0	2	1.7	2	1.6

M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

Table 4.19 illustrates the group composition of travel parties staying in commercial accommodation. Similar to hosts' accommodation, travel parties comprising two adults was the most common group in commercial accommodation (45%) and higher among VF



travel parties that visited the immigrant hosts (63%). However, the number of groups consisting of both adults and children was higher with VR travel parties visiting the immigrant hosts (50%).

**Table 4.19: Group Compositions of Travel Parties Staying in Commercial Accommodation (%)**

Composition	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	Type of Travel party				Type of Travel party			
No. of Adults	VF (n)	Proportion	VR (n)	%	VF	%	VR	%
0	1	2.9	0	15.4	0	0	0	0
1	7	20.0	4	46.2	8	21.6	1	5.9
2	22	62.9	12	11.5	19	51.4	9	52.9
3	1	2.9	3	19.2	5	13.5	4	23.5
4	2	5.7	5	3.8	2	5.4	2	11.8
5 or more	2	5.7	2	3.9	3	8.1	1	5.9
<b>No. of Children</b>								
0	23	65.7	13	50.0	23	62.2	9	52.9
1	7	20.0	7	26.9	5	13.5	2	11.8
2	4	11.4	3	11.5	5	13.5	3	17.6
3	1	2.9	1	3.8	1	2.7	3	17.6
4	0	0	1	3.8	1	2.7	0	0
5 or more	0	0	1	3.8	2	5.4	0	0

M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation

#### 4.4.5 FREQUENCY OF VISIT FROM VFRs

In the online survey, respondents were asked whether their recent VFRs were repeat visitors or first-time visitors. As depicted in Table 4.20, the majority (74%) of visitors were repeat visitors. Interestingly, the proportion of repeat visitors was higher among non-immigrant hosts (80%) and by VR travellers (86%). In contrast, immigrant hosts hosted more first-time visitors (32%) who were higher among VFs (52%).

**Table 4.20: The Visitation Frequency of VFRs between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Visitation Frequency	Immigrant Host				Non-immigrant Host			
	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
Repeat Visitors	76	59.4	103	76.9	100	73.5	125	86.2

<b>First-time visitors</b>	52	40.6	31	23.1	36	26.5	20	13.8
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Table 4.21 provides the proportion of first-time and repeat visitors in metropolitan versus regional areas. The proportion of repeat visitors was higher in the regional areas (64%) and by VR travel parties (73%). First-time visitors were higher (30%) among metropolitan visitors and more with VF travel parties (29%).

**Table 4.21: The Visitation Frequency of VFRs between Hosts in Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

<b>Visitation Frequency</b>	<b>Metropolitan</b>				<b>Regional</b>			
	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Repeat Visitors</b>	123	52.6	157	67.1	53	54.6	71	73.2
<b>First-time visitors</b>	67	28.6	36	15.4	21	21.6	15	15.5

Respondent VFR hosts were also asked the number of times their repeat VFRs had visited them before to understand the degree of repeat visitation of VFRs to the same hosts. The differences in the degree of repeat visitation of VFRs hosted by the immigrant and non-immigrant hosts is presented below in Table 4.22. Overall the average number of repeat visitation of VFRs to the same hosts was similar between immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts ( $M = 6$  times). However, the average number of repeat visits was slightly higher with relatives ( $M = 7$  times) than with friends ( $M = 6$  times) and hosted more by non-immigrant hosts.

**Table 4.22: Number of Repeat Visits of VFRs to the Same Hosts between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

<b>Visitation Frequency</b>	<b>Immigrant</b>				<b>Non-immigrant</b>			
	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Once</b>	8	10.5	9	8.7	5	5.0	11	8.8

<b>Twice</b>	10	13.2	28	27.2	13	13.0	16	12.8
<b>Three times</b>	10	13.2	20	19.4	12	12.0	13	10.4
<b>Four times</b>	8	10.5	4	3.9	20	20.0	12	9.6
<b>Five times</b>	8	10.5	10	9.7	9	9.0	7	5.6
<b>Six times</b>	11	14.5	1	1.0	4	4.0	9	7.2
<b>Seven Times</b>	1	1.3	2	1.9	5	5.0	3	2.4
<b>Eight times</b>	4	5.3	2	1.9	2	2.0	7	5.6
<b>Nine Times</b>	3	3.9	-		2	2.0	2	1.6
<b>10 times</b>	3	3.9	6	5.8	7	7.0	13	10.4
<b>11-15 times</b>	5	6.6	3	2.9	8	8.0	10	8.0
<b>16-20 times</b>	2	2.6	4	3.9	5	5.0	10	8.0
<b>21-30 times</b>	1	1.3	6	5.8	3	3.0	3	2.4
<b>31+ times</b>	2	2.6	8	7.8	5	5.0	9	7.2
<b>Total</b>	76	100	103	100	100	100	125	100
<b>M(SD)</b>	5.58(3.46)		6.23(4.87)		5.97(3.86)		6.80(4.11)	

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation*

Table 4.23 presents the degree of repeat visitation between the repeat visitors visiting metropolitan and regional areas. It reveals that repeat visitors had visited same hosts at least six times before. However, the average was slightly higher among the visitors in the regional areas ( $M = 6$  times) and with VR travel parties ( $M = 7$  times).

**Table 4.23: Number of Visits of VFRs to the Same Hosts between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

<b>Visitation Frequency</b>	<b>Metropolitan</b>				<b>Regional</b>			
	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VF (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>VR (n)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Once</b>	11	8.9	15	9.6	2	3.8	5	7.0
<b>Twice</b>	13	10.6	33	21.0	10	18.9	11	15.5
<b>Three times</b>	17	13.8	24	15.3	5	9.4	9	12.7
<b>Four times</b>	19	15.4	11	7.0	9	17.0	5	7.0
<b>Five times</b>	10	8.1	10	6.4	7	13.2	7	9.9
<b>Six times</b>	13	10.6	7	4.5	2	3.8	3	4.2
<b>Seven Times</b>	3	2.4	4	2.5	3	5.7	1	1.4
<b>Eight times</b>	5	4.1	5	3.2	1	1.9	4	5.6
<b>Nine Times</b>	4	3.3	1	6	1	1.9	1	1.4
<b>10 times</b>	6	4.9	13	8.3	4	7.5	6	8.5

<b>11-15 times</b>	10	8.1	9	5.7	3	5.7	4	5.6
<b>16-20 times</b>	6	4.9	10	6.4	1	1.9	4	5.6
<b>21-30 times</b>	3	2.4	4	2.5	1	1.9	5	7.0
<b>31+ times</b>	3	2.4	11	7.0	4	7.5	6	8.5
<b>Total</b>	123	100	157	100	53	100	71	100
<b>M(SD)</b>	5.78(3.70)		5.86(4.30)		5.88(3.90)		6.70 (4.42)	

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation*

#### 4.4.6 DURATION/LENGTH OF STAY OF VFRs

Respondents were asked about the length of stay of their VFR travel parties. Table 4.24 below, shows that the average length of stay of VFR travel parties was five nights for both immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. There was slight difference identified only between the average duration of stay of VF ( $M = 5$  nights) and VR ( $M = 6$  nights) travel parties, as shown in Table 4.24.

**Table 4.24: Number of Nights Stayed by VFRs Visiting Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Number of Nights	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%	VF (n)	%	VR (n)	%
<b>One</b>	22	13.8	14	8.8	16	9.3	20	11.6
<b>Two</b>	26	16.4	18	11.3	37	21.5	29	16.9
<b>Three</b>	22	13.8	21	13.2	25	14.5	18	10.5
<b>Four</b>	8	5.0	7	4.4	16	9.3	14	8.1
<b>Five</b>	10	6.3	15	9.4	10	5.8	24	14.0
<b>Six</b>	4	2.5	2	1.3	4	2.3	3	1.7
<b>7-13</b>	9	5.7	14	8.8	6	3.5	12	7.0
<b>14-20</b>	16	10.1	25	15.7	18	10.5	15	8.7
<b>21-21+</b>	42	26.4	43	27.1	40	23.3	37	21.5
<b>Total</b>	159	100	159	100	172	100	172	100
<b>M(SD)</b>	5.37(3.43)		5.98(3.22)		5.16(3.32)		5.21(3.19)	

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation*

Table 4.25 presents the length of stay of VFRs in metropolitan and regional areas. As indicated in Table 4.25, the average length of stay of VFRs in regional areas ( $M = 6$  nights)

was slightly longer than the metropolitan areas ( $M = 5$  nights). Further, VRs stayed longer ( $M = 6$  nights) than from VFs ( $M = 5$  nights).

**Table 4.25: Number of Nights Stayed VFRs between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

Number of Nights	Metropolitan				Regional			
	VF (n)	Proportion %	VR (n)	Proportion %	VF (n)	Proportion %	VR (n)	Proportion%
<b>One</b>	28	14.7	21	10.9	11	14.9	13	15.1
<b>Two</b>	44	23.2	31	16.1	19	25.7	16	18.6
<b>Three</b>	35	18.4	29	15.0	12	16.2	10	11.6
<b>Four</b>	19	10.0	15	7.8	5	6.8	6	7.0
<b>Five</b>	14	7.4	30	15.5	6	8.1	9	10.5
<b>Six</b>	7	3.7	5	2.6	1	1.4	9	10.5
<b>7-13</b>	25	13.1	35	18.1	13	17.5	19	22.1
<b>14-20</b>	11	5.8	11	5.7	3	4.0	7	8.1
<b>21-21+</b>	7	3.7	15	7.8	4	5.4	6	7.0
<b>Total</b>	190	100	193	100	74	100	86	100
<b>M(SD)</b>	4.97(4.95)		6.26(5.76)		5.22(5.26)		6.27(5.91)	

*M=Mean; SD= Standard Deviation*

#### 4.4.7 PURPOSES OF VISIT

Respondent VFR hosts were asked about the primary purpose of visit for their most recent VFR travel parties. Table 4.26 provides the results regarding the primary purpose of visits of VFR travel parties hosted by immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. ‘Visiting friends and/or relatives’ was the top primary purpose of visit (63%), followed by ‘Holiday/Pleasure’ (30%) and ‘Business/Professional’ purpose (5%). ‘Others’ (3%) included purposes such as medical/doctor’s appointment, family events or visiting any local festivals or events.

However, the VFR purpose of visit responses was higher with VFRs visiting non-immigrant hosts (68%) than with immigrant hosts (57%). However, ‘Holiday/Pleasure’ as the primary purpose of visits was higher for VFRs visiting the immigrant hosts (35%) than the non-immigrants (26%). Moreover, the VFR primary travel purpose was higher with VRs (70%), and ‘Holiday/Pleasure’ purpose was higher for VFs (37%).

**Table 4.26: Primary Purpose of Visits of VFRs Visiting Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Main Purpose	Immigrant		Non-immigrant	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
<b>VF/VR/Family Event</b>	49.2 (n=63)	64.7 (n=86)	60.3 (n=82)	75.9 (n=110)
<b>Holiday/Pleasure</b>	40.6 (n=52)	28.6 (n=38)	33.1 (n=45)	17.9 (n=26)
<b>Business/Professional</b>	7.0 (n=9)	3.8 (n=5)	5.1 (n=7)	3.4 (n=5)
<b>Others</b>	3.1 (n=4)	3.0 (n=4)	1.5 (n=2)	2.8 (n=4)

Table 4.27 below, on the other hand, shows that VFR as the main purpose of visit was higher among VFRs visiting regional areas (69%) than the metropolitan areas (60%).

**Table 4.27: Primary Purpose of Visits of VFRs Visiting Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

Main Purpose	Metropolitan		Regional	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
<b>VF/VR/Family Event</b>	51.1(n=97)	69.3(n=133)	64.9(n=48)	73.3(n=63)
<b>Holiday/Pleasure</b>	41.1(n=78)	23.4(n=45)	25.7(n=19)	22.1(n=19)
<b>Business/Professional</b>	5.8(n=11)	4.2(n=80)	6.8(n=5)	2.3(n=2)
<b>Others</b>	2.1(n=4)	3.1(n=6)	2.7(n=2)	2.3(n=2)

Additionally, 34% of VFRs who had VFR as the main purpose of the visit also had a secondary non-VFR purpose of visit, as shown in Table 4.28 below. VFR in combination with holidays, as indicated in Table 4.28, was the most common combination of purposes (22%). This combination was reported more for VFRs visiting immigrant hosts (26%) and with VRs (27%).

**Table 4.28: Different Purposes of Visits of VFRs between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Purposes	Immigrant		Non-immigrant	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
<b>VFR with Holiday</b>	25.0 (n=32)	27.1 (n=36)	22.1 (n=30)	15.2 (n=22)
<b>VFR with Business</b>	3.9 (n=5)	2.3 (n=3)	1.5 (n=2)	.7 (n=1)
<b>VFR with Others</b>	-	.8 (n=1)	.7 (n=1)	.7 (n=1)
<b>VFR with Holiday and Business</b>	2.3 (n=3)	1.5 (n=2)	1.5 (n=2)	.7 (n=1)
	.8 (n=1)	.8 (n=1)	.7 (n=1)	-

<b>VFR with Holiday and Others</b>				
<b>Holiday with Business</b>	.8 (n=1)	-	-	.7 (n=1)
<b>Holiday with Others</b>	-	-	-	.7 (n=1)

On the other hand, Table 4.29 demonstrates that the combination of VFR and holiday purposes of visits was higher among VFRs in the metropolitan areas (26.1%) than in regional areas (19.6%).

**Table 4.29: Different Purposes of Visit of VFRs between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Metropolitan</b>		<b>Regional</b>	
	<b>VF%</b>	<b>VR%</b>	<b>VF%</b>	<b>VR%</b>
<b>VFR with Holiday</b>	33.3 (n=78)	18.8 (n=45)	19.6 (n=19)	19.6 (n=19)
<b>VFR with Business</b>	4.7 (n=11)	1.7 (n=4)	5.2 (n=5)	1.0 (n=1)
<b>VFR with Others</b>	1.7 (n=4)	0.4 (n=1)	2.1 (n=2)	2.1 (n=2)
<b>VFR with Holiday and Business</b>	-	1.3 (n=3)	-	1.0 (n=1)
<b>VFR with Holiday and Others</b>	-	-	-	1.0 (n=1)
<b>Holiday with Business</b>	-	0.4 (n=1)	-	-
<b>Holiday with Others</b>	-	0.4 (n=1)	-	-

#### **4.4.8 MODE OF TRANSPORT**

This section reports the modes of transportation used by VFR travel parties to visit their hosts. The objective was to understand transit routes utilised by VFR travellers. Table 4.30

presents the proportion of the different mode of transports used by VFR travel parties visiting immigrant and non-immigrant hosts.

As indicated in Table 4.30, more than half of the visitors (54%) relied on the self-drive option, followed by aeroplane (41%) and train (3%). However, the travel parties who took the flying route to the destinations was higher among travel parties that visiting immigrant hosts (43%) than non-immigrants (39%). This is understandable as immigrants had more relatives visiting from overseas.

**Table 4.30: Mode of Transport of VFR Travel Parties Visited between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Mode of Transport	Immigrant		Non-Immigrant	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
<b>Aeroplane</b>	41.6 (n=32)	44.4 (n=32)	42.9 (n=51)	34.8 (n=46)
<b>Drove</b>	54.5 (n=42)	47.2 (n=34)	54.6 (n=65)	61.4 (n=81)
<b>By train</b>	2.6 (n=2)	2.8 (n=2)	1.7 (n=2)	3.0 (n=4)
<b>By Bus</b>	-	2.8 (n=2)	-	.8 (n=1)
<b>Other</b>	1.3 (n=1)	2.8 (n=2)	.8 (n=1)	-

In contrast, Table 4.31 presents the proportion of different modes of transport used by the VFR travel parties to metropolitan and regional areas. Half of the travel parties that visiting metropolitan destinations travelled by air whereas VFR travel parties who visited the regional destinations drove (45%).

**Table 4.31: Mode of Transport of VFR Travel Parties Visited between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

Mode of Transport	Metropolitan		Regional	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
<b>Flew by airplane</b>	48.7 (n=32)	50.9 (n=119)	33.0 (n=32)	34.0 (n=33)
<b>Drove</b>	30.0 (n=70)	28.2 (n=66)	39.2 (n=38)	50.5 (n=49)



<b>By train</b>	1.3 (n=3)	1.3 (n=3)	2.1 (n=2)	3.1 (n=3)
<b>By Bus</b>	-	1.3 (n=3)	-	-
<b>Other</b>	1.3 (n=3)	0.9 (n=2)	2.1 (n=2)	1.0 (n=1)

## 4.5 GENERAL FINDINGS: DECISIONS & ACTIVITIES WITHIN VFR TRAVEL

This section presents the general findings of the online survey related to the decisions and activities undertaken by the participant VFR hosts and their VFRs. In the survey, participants were asked about the travel related decisions and activities undertaken by their VFRs during the visit and the hosting decisions and activities they had to undertake to host their VFRs. The responses are presented in the following sections.

### 4.5.1 ATTRACTIONS & ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDED BY VFR HOSTS

The recommendation on attractions and activities provided by VFR hosts to their VFRs is a significant part of the hosting role. This carries considerable influence on the travel decisions and subsequent activities of VFR travellers (Young et al., 2007). So, the respondent VFR hosts were asked to specify the local attractions and activities they recommended to their VFRs. The objective was to learn about the type of activities and attractions reinforced by the VFR hosts. As the question was open-ended, the responses were very broad. A total of **1437** individual attractions and activities items were mentioned by the local resident VFR hosts. For the purpose of analysis, the individual items were grouped into eleven categories based on the nature of items, and is provided in Table 4.32.

**Table 4.32: Activities and Attractions: Recommended by VFR Hosts**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Individual Item</b>
<b>Natural Attractions</b>	Bays/Headlands: Beach, Harbour/Falls: Island; Lakes/Rivers; Mountains/Ranges/Lookouts; National Parks/Reserves/Forest; Reef
<b>Built Attractions</b>	Aquarium; Art Gallery/Archive/Exhibition; Dam/Reservoir; Landmarks/Monuments; Museum; Observatory; Public Parks/Gardens/Botanical Gardens; Sports Complex; Theme Parks/Amusement Parks; Waterfronts, Wineries/Vineyards; Zoo/Wildlife; Parks/Sanctuary
<b>Townships/Regions/Localities</b>	City/CBD; Historical; Regional; Port; Ranges/Mountains; Seaside/Coastal; Valley/River; Wine Growing Region
<b>Activities</b>	Walking; Fishing; Playing Sports; Swimming; Bush Walking/Walk; Cycling; Trailing; Hiking; BBQ; Picnic; Scenic Drive; Sightseeing; Camping; Boating; Horse Riding; Ice Skating; Exercise; Playing Video Games; Indoor Games; Watching Movies
<b>Entertainment</b>	Casino/Club; Movies/Cinema; Theatre/Opera
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	Music Events; Cultural Events; Floriade; Sports Game/Events; Local Festival
<b>Retail</b>	Shopping; Shopping Mall/Centre; Market; Fish market, Local Produce Market, Grocery; China Town; Local Shops; Factory Outlets
<b>Hospitality</b>	Dining Out; Restaurant; Café; Pub/Bars;
<b>Tours</b>	Package Tour; Day Tour; Ferry Ride/Boat Ride/Cruise; Whale Watching; Beer Factory; Submarine Tour, Airfield Base; Wine Tasting
<b>Others</b>	Visit Other Family Members/Friends; Meal At Home Together, Socialising Indoor; Babysitting; Family Activities; Attending Funerals; Playing With Kids; Attending Family Events; Can't Recall

Overall, local 'Built Attractions' were recommended most (30% of the recommended items), closely followed by local 'Natural Attractions' (23% of the recommended items). Visiting different 'Townships/Regions' were the third most recommended attraction (12% of the recommended attractions).

Within the 'Built Attractions' category local 'Landmarks/Monuments' were most popular, followed by 'Parks/Gardens/Botanical Gardens' (19%) and 'Zoos/Wildlife parks/Sanctuaries' (16%). Within the natural attractions category 'Beach' was mentioned most (36%), followed by 'Mountains/Ranges/Lookouts' (17%) and 'National parks/Reserve/Forests' (14%). Within the 'Townships/Regions/Localities' 'Seaside/coastal' town or region (24%) and "City/CBD" areas (24%) were the two most popular responses. The other two popular mentions were "Port" (11%) and "Wine growing region" (11%).

In terms of Activities having a 'Walk' with VFRs was the most popular choice (19%), followed by 'Fishing' (13%), 'Playing sports' (10%) and 'Swimming' (10%). Regarding entertainments 'Casino/Clubs' were way ahead as the most popular (48%) than watching 'Movies/Cinema' (26%) and 'Theatre/Opera' (17%). 'Sporting game' mentioned as another popular event to go (26%), followed by 'Festivals/Fairs' (24%) and 'Floriade' (21%).

In the case of retailing 'Shopping/Shopping centres/Mall' were the most recommended (47%). This was followed by "Markets (including open market, fish market, farmers market, produce market etc.)" (32%) and "Shops" (12%). Regarding hospitality options "Restaurants/Food outlets" were mentioned the most number of times (40%), followed by Pubs/Bars (18%) and Café (13%). The respondents mentioned "Ferry Rides/Boat Rides/Cruise" as the most popular tour of choice (26%). The "Whale watching" (11%) and visiting "Breweries/Distilleries" (10%) were the following two popular tour options. There

were only seven respondents mentioned “none” as their responses in terms of recommending activities and attractions to their VFRs (i.e. less than one percent).

Regarding the group differences in recommendations provided by VFR hosts, Table 4.33 below indicates that immigrant VFR hosts were more likely to recommend touristic attractions like built and natural attractions, and tour options. Whereas non-immigrant hosts were recommended less mainstream touristic activities, festival/events and hospitality options. Moreover, immigrant hosts recommended shopping more than the non-immigrant hosts.

**Table 4.33: Activities and Attractions Recommended by Immigrant and Non-immigrant VFR Hosts (%)**

<b>Activities &amp; Attractions Mentioned</b>	<b>Immigrant Host (%)</b>	<b>Non-immigrant Host (%)</b>
<b>Natural Attractions</b>	24.1% (n=173)	22.5% (n=165)
<b>Built Attractions</b>	35.2% (n=253)	29.2% (n=214)
<b>Townships/Regions/Localities</b>	11.7% (n=84)	11.6% (n=85)
<b>Activities</b>	7.4% (n=53)	10.6% (n=78)
<b>Entertainments</b>	2.9% (n=21)	3.0% (n=25)
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	1.9% (n=14)	3.3% (n=24)
<b>Retail</b>	6.4% (n=46)	5.9% (n=43)
<b>Hospitality</b>	4.3% (n=31)	8.0% (n=59)
<b>Tours</b>	4.7% (n=34)	3.8% (n=28)
<b>Others</b>	0.8% (n=6)	1.4% (n=10)

Table 4.34, on the other hand, presents the recommendations of VFR hosts to their VFRs between the hosts in metropolitan and regional areas. Overall, Table 4.34 demonstrates that local resident VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas showed more tendency towards recommending ‘Built Attractions’ (35%) and ‘Townships/Regions/Localities’ (12%). However, VFR hosts in the regional areas recommended more of ‘Natural Attractions’ (23%) and various ‘Activities’ (20%) to their VFRs.

**Table 4.34: Activities and Attractions Recommended by the VFR Hosts in Contrasting Destinations (%)**

<b>Activities &amp; Attractions Mentioned</b>	<b>Metropolitan Host (%)</b>	<b>Regional Host (%)</b>
<b>Natural Attractions</b>	21.4 (n= 230)	22.5 (n=80)
<b>Built Attractions</b>	33.7 (n=362)	21.1 (n= 75)
<b>Townships/Regions/Localities</b>	13.6 (n=146)	10.1 (n=36)
<b>Activities</b>	7.7 (n= 83)	20.3 (n=72)
<b>Entertainments</b>	2.7 (n= 29)	2.0 (n=7)
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	2.1 (n= 23)	3.4 (n=12)
<b>Retail</b>	6.9 (n= 74)	5.9 (n=21)
<b>Hospitality</b>	7.3 (n= 78)	8.2 (n=29)
<b>Tours</b>	3.9 (n= 42)	0.6 (n= 20)
<b>Others</b>	0.2 (n= 2)	0.3 (n= 1)
<b>None</b>	0.4 (n=4)	0.6 (n=2)

#### **4.5.2 ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS VISITED BY THE VFRs**

VFR travellers are inclined to rely heavily on their hosts' recommendation in deciding their travel decisions and activities (Young et al., 2007). So it can be expected that the activities and attractions of VFR travellers would reflect the recommendations of the local resident VFR hosts as reported in the previous section (section 4.5.1).

In the survey, respondent VFR hosts were asked to state the type of activities and attractions that their recent group of visitors engaged in during the visit. As the question was open-ended, the responses were again very broad. The responses were similarly clustered into ten categories as in Table 4.32.

Overall, participant VFR hosts indicated 'Hospitality' (20%) and 'Retail' (16%) as the top two activities of their VFRs. Within the 'Hospitality', dining out in restaurants/food outlets (92%) was the most frequent activities undertaken by visitors. In case of 'Retail' activities, shopping (90%) was mentioned most frequently.

In terms of visiting attractions, again ‘Built Attractions’ was more popular than ‘Natural Built Attractions’. This finding is consistent with the overall recommendations provided by VFR hosts as presented in the previous section (Section 4.5.1)

Table 4.35 below presents the differences in activities undertaken between VFRs who visited immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. As indicated in Table 4.35, visitors to non-immigrant hosts were more frequent than immigrants in participating in both hospitality (21%) and retail (17%) activities. However, immigrant hosts’ VFs preferred shopping (16 %) than the VF’s of the non-immigrant hosts (14%).

VFR’s visiting the immigrant host were more prolific visitors of attractions than the VFRs visiting the non-immigrant hosts. VFRs of immigrant hosts were more highly represented in both visiting natural (15%) and built attractions (16%) than the VFRs of non-immigrant hosts. Moreover, those VFRs hosted by immigrants were more frequently engaged in ‘Sightseeing’ activities whereas VFRs visited the non-immigrants involved in ‘outdoor activities’ like fishing, swimming, biking and BBQ more frequently.

Overall, the findings of Table 4.35 aligned with the findings provided by the immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts (see Table 4.33). As demonstrated in Table 4.35 VFRs who visited the immigrant hosts participated more in natural and built attractions while non-immigrant hosts spent more time enjoying activities, festival/events and hospitality options.

**Table 4.35: Activities and Attractions of VFRs Hosted between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts (%)**

Activities & Attractions	Immigrant		Non-Immigrant	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
Natural Attractions	14.5	15.2	11.6	8.8
Built Attractions	15.5	15.6	12.6	13.9
Townships/Regions/Localities	5.1	2.9	3.1	3.6
Activities	14.7	14.2	15.0	12.7
Entertainments	4.1	6.4	7.0	5.8
Festivals/Events	4.3	4.6	6.5	3.9
Retail	16.2	13.9	14.3	20.4
Hospitality	19.0	18.3	23.9	19.0
Tours	1.5	2.2	1.2	2.7
Others	3.0	4.6	3.6	6.8
None	2.0	2.0	1.2	2.4

Table 4.36 presents the activities and attractions of VFR travel parties, disaggregating the findings between metropolitan and regional areas. As demonstrated previously (Table 4.34) hosts in the metropolitan areas recommended ‘Built Attractions’ most frequently, whereas hosts in the regional areas recommended ‘Natural Attractions’ more frequently to their VFRs. Similarly, Table 4.36 below illustrates that VFRs in the metropolitan areas visited the ‘Built Attractions’ most (16%), whereas VFRs in the regional areas visited ‘Natural Attractions’ in the highest proportion (15%). Table 4.36 also shows higher participation in ‘Hospitality’ activities from the VFs (22%) in contrast with a higher participation in ‘Retail’ activities from the VRs (16%).

**Table 4.36: Activities and Attractions of VFRs between Metropolitan and Regional Areas (%)**

Activities & Attractions	Metropolitan		Regional	
	VF%	VR%	VF%	VR%
Natural Attractions	13.7	11.5	15.5	14.6
Built Attractions	15.8	16.0	6.5	11.6
Townships/Regions/Localities	4.7	4.4	1.5	1.7
Activities	13.0	14.4	21.5	17.6

<b>Entertainments</b>	6.1	7.3	5.5	3.0
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	5.6	4.5	4	3.4
<b>Retail</b>	15.0	16.5	14	15.4
<b>Hospitality</b>	21.5	18	23	21.0
<b>Tours</b>	0.7	1.3	0.5	0.4
<b>Others</b>	3.6	5.1	6	9.9
<b>None</b>	0.3	1.1	2	1.3

#### 4.5.3 LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF VFR HOSTS

VFR hosts recommend as well as join in with their VFRs in their travel activities and visiting of attractions (Backer, 2007; Mckercher, 1995). The respondents were, therefore, asked to specify what activities and attractions they attended with their visitors. Table 4.37 provides the level of participation of local resident VFR hosts in different activities and attractions. Overall, the participation rate of VFR hosts with their VFRs in their travel activities and visiting of attractions was very high (79%). Interestingly, there was no difference in overall participation rate between immigrant (79%) and non-immigrant hosts (79%), but there were differences between the level of participation with friends and with relatives.

Table 4.37 reveals that the overall level of participation with relatives (85%) was higher than with friends (72%). While the level of participation with relatives was slightly higher among immigrant groups (84%) the level of participation with friends was higher among non-immigrant groups (74%).

**Table 4.37: Level of Participation between Immigrant and Non-immigrant VFR Hosts (%)**

Activities & Attractions Attended	Level of Attendance			
	Immigrant		Non-immigrant	
	VF %	VR %	VF %	VR %
<b>Natural Attractions</b>	71.9	88.7	77.1	80.6
<b>Built Attractions</b>	63.9	79.7	71.2	86.0
<b>Townships/Regions/Localities</b>	85.0	91.7	84.6	86.7
<b>Activities</b>	81.0	89.7	74.2	82.7



<b>Entertainments</b>	62.5	100.0	82.8	79.2
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	70.6	89.5	74.1	87.5
<b>Retail</b>	54.7	84.2	72.9	75.9
<b>Hospitality</b>	88.0	96.0	85.6	84.8
<b>Tours</b>	83.3	88.9	80.0	100.0
<b>Others</b>	41.7	63.2	38.5	71.4

Table 4.38, reveals that the ‘Built Attractions’ was the most preferred attractions in the metropolitan areas (16%) whereas ‘Natural Attractions’ topped in regional areas (13%). VFR hosts participated more in ‘Built Attractions’ with their VRs (15%) than with their VFs (10%), indicating VFR hosts’ higher participating in paid attractions with their relatives. VFR hosts participated more in ‘Hospitality’ activities with their VFs (26%) though more VRs in ‘Retail’ activities (16%).

**Table 4.38: Level of Participation of VFR hosts in Contrasting Destinations**

Activities & Attractions Attended	Level of Attendance			
	Metropolitan		Regional	
	VF %	VR %	VF %	VR %
<b>Natural attractions</b>	14.0	13.4	13.5	13.3
<b>Built attractions</b>	16.4	15.9	5.1	13.9
<b>Townships/Regions/Localities</b>	6.2	3.9	2.6	1.1
<b>Activities</b>	13.0	13.4	23.7	20.6
<b>Entertainments</b>	5.9	7.7	3.8	2.8
<b>Festivals/Events</b>	3.6	4.3	4.5	3.3
<b>Retail</b>	12.8	16.1	14.1	16.1
<b>Hospitality</b>	25.6	19.5	25.6	21.7
<b>Tours</b>	0.8	1.1	1.9	0.5
<b>Others</b>	1.9	4.5	5.1	6.7

#### **4.5.4 AREAS OF EXPENSES RELATING TO HOSTING VFRs**

In the survey, participant VFR hosts were asked to estimate their total additional expenses of hosting their most recent VFR travel parties across a range of categories in order to understand VFR hosts’ economic contribution through hosting VFRs. Overall, VFR hosts demonstrated a diverse range of spending in hosting their VFRs. VFR hosts in this study most commonly spent within the range of AU\$1-AU\$50 across the key categories, such as

groceries; recreational shopping; restaurant; liquor; fuel; paid attractions and, entertainments. Groceries accounted for most hosting expenditure, followed by dining out in restaurants, fuel and liquor.

Table 4.39 below shows immigrant VFR hosts commonly spent within AU\$1-AU\$50 across all the categories while hosting their friends spending most on liquor, followed by fuel and groceries. Thus immigrant VFR hosts' are most likely to spend on hospitality, travel and social activities while hosting their friends.

**Table 4.39: Expenses of Immigrant Hosts for Hosting VFs (whole visit)**

Cost (in Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	15.5	52.3	23.5	36.6	32	64.9	76.5	84.3
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	31.3	16.4	20.3	33.6	32.0	11.7	9.4	7.8
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	21.9	10.9	18.8	16.4	22.7	7.8	7.0	5.5
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	4.7	3.1	7.8	5.5	3.9	3.1	2.3	-
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	10.2	10.2	13.3	3.9	6.3	7.0	2.3	-
<b>\$200+</b>	16.4	7.1	16.3	4	3.1	5.5	4.8	2.4

Grc= Groceries; Shp= Shopping; Rst= Restaurent; Lqr= Liquor; PA= Paid Attraction; Ent= Entertainment; Othrs= Others

Table 4.40, on the other hand, shows immigrant hosts' expenses when hosting their relatives. Similar to friends, immigrant hosts spent mostly on liquor, fuel and buying groceries but spent more money on dining out and paid attractions with their relatives than with their friends. As shown in Table 4.40 below, immigrant VFR hosts frequently spent within the range of AU\$1-AU\$50 in most of the categories with their relatives except in dining out and visiting paid attractions where they spent in a higher range (i.e. mostly AU \$200+).

**Table 4.40: Expenses of Immigrant Hosts for Hosting VRs (whole visit)**

Cost (in Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs%
<b>None</b>	31.4	53.8	25.5	38.9	25.4	63.7	70.3	74.8
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	24.6	14.2	13.4	30.6	29.9	10.4	11.2	9.0
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	22.4	12.7	17.2	15.7	22.4	10.4	8.2	4.5
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	2.2	2.2	7.5	3.7	6.0	3.7	1.5	2.2
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	15.7	10.4	14.9	6.0	6.0	3.7	3.0	3.7
<b>\$200+</b>	3.7	6.7	21.5	5.1	10.3	8.1	5.8	5.8

Grc= Groceries; Shp= Shopping; Rst= Restaurent; Lqr= Liquor; PA= Paid Attraction; Ent= Entertainment; Othrs= Others

Table 4.41 below shows the expenses incurred by non-immigrant VFR hosts when hosting their friends. Non-immigrant VFR hosts also spent mostly on liquor, followed by fuel and groceries. However, while immigrants commonly spent a maximum AU\$50 across all the categories for hosting their friends (as demonstrated in Table 4.39), non-immigrants spent more money (mostly within AU\$51-AU\$100) on dining out with their friends. This finding indicates non-immigrant hosts tend to spend more money with their friends than immigrant hosts.

**Table 4.41: Expenses of Non-immigrant Hosts for Hosting VFs (whole visit)**

Cost (in Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA%	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	11.8	53.8	25.1	27.2	34	70.8	67.7	86.1
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	33.1	16.9	19.1	35.3	41.9	13.2	16.9	5.1
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	30.1	11.0	29.4	24.3	15.4	6.6	10.3	2.2
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	6.6	2.2	5.1	2.9	1.5	2.9	-	1.5
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	7.4	9.6	10.3	5.9	2.2	4.4	3.7	2.2

<b>\$200+</b>	11	6.5	11	4.4	5.0	2.1	1.4	2.9
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Grc= Groceries; Shp= Shopping; Rst= Restaurant; Lqr= Liquor; PA= Paid Attraction; Ent= Entertainment; Othrs= Others

Table 4.42 below shows that non-immigrant hosts spent mostly on fuel with their relatives, indicating non-immigrant VFR hosts' inclination to participate with their relatives in their travel activities. However, while immigrant hosts spent more than non-immigrant hosts in multiple categories (such as dining out and paid attractions), non-immigrant hosts spent more in one category: recreational shopping. This finding suggests that immigrant hosts might spend more money than the non-immigrant hosts with their relatives.

**Table 4.42: Expenses of Non-immigrant Hosts for Hosting VRs (whole visit)**

<b>Cost (in Australian \$)</b>	<b>Areas</b>							
	<b>Grc%</b>	<b>Shp %</b>	<b>Rst %</b>	<b>Lqr %</b>	<b>Fuel %</b>	<b>PA %</b>	<b>Ent %</b>	<b>Othrs %</b>
<b>None</b>	13.6	59.3	26.8	42	33.8	76.5	74.4	93.1
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	34.5	11.7	23.4	29.7	40.0	11.7	13.1	-
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	22.8	17.9	20.0	15.2	17.2	6.2	9.0	4.1
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	6.9	1.4	8.3	6.2	4.1	2.1	1.4	-
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	8.3	3.4	9.7	3.4	.7	.7	2.1	.7
<b>\$200+</b>	13.9	6.3	11.8	3.5	4.2	2.8	-	2.1

Grc= Groceries; Shp= Shopping; Rst= Restaurant; Lqr= Liquor; PA= Paid Attraction; Ent= Entertainment; Othrs= Others

The following table (Table 4.43) presents the expenses of VFR hosts while hosting friends in metropolitan areas. Other than groceries, restaurant bills and travelling around, VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas reported frequent expenditure on recreational shopping, paid attractions (such as theme parks, zoos and museums), and entertainment such as cinema, sporting and cultural events. Overall, VFR hosts in metropolitan areas mostly spent between AU\$1 and AU\$50 across different categories in hosting their friends.

**Table 4.43: Expenses of Hosting VFs by the Hosts in the Metropolitan Areas (whole visit)**

Cost (In Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	29.9	61.2	37.8	44.4	46.1	68.8	73.8	87.9
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	23.9	13.2	15.3	27.7	28.6	11.1	11.1	4.6
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	22.7	7.7	17.4	16.2	16.1	7.2	7.3	3.3
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	4.7	1.7	5.9	3.9	2.1	3	1.3	.4
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	6.8	9.4	10.3	3.8	3.8	6.0	3.5	1.3
<b>\$200+</b>	12.0	6.8	13.3	4.0	3.3	3.9	3.0	2.5

As indicated in Table 4.44 groceries accounted for the highest hosting expenditure, followed by dining out in restaurants, fuel and then liquor. VFR hosts in metropolitan areas also spent frequently on recreational shopping, paid attractions, and entertainment with their relatives. Similar to hosts of friends, their total additional expenditure was within the range of AU\$1-AU\$50 during the visit, as presented in Table 4.43.

**Table 4.44: Expenses of Hosting VRs by the Hosts in the Metropolitan Areas (whole visit)**

Cost (in Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	27.9	63.8	38.6	50.7	59.4	74	76.2	85.7
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	24.3	9.1	11.9	23.8	28.6	8.1	8.4	3.3
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	18.4	12.3	16.2	12.4	17.5	8.1	8.6	4.2
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	3.0	2.1	6.5	4.3	3.9	2.6	1.3	1.3
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	11.1	6.4	10.3	5.1	3.4	1.7	2.6	2.1
<b>\$200+</b>	15.3	6.3	16.5	3.7	6.0	5.5	2.9	3.4

Conversely, VFR hosts in the regional areas spent most in visiting paid attractions with their friends followed by entertainments and recreational shopping (Table 4.45). However, VFR hosts in the regional areas also spend to the same degree within AU\$1-AU\$50 across the categories as their metropolitan hosts.

**Table 4.45: Expenses of Hosting VFs by the Hosts in the Regional Areas (whole visit)**

Cost (In Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	34.0	66.0	44.3	48.5	48.5	87.6	83.5	89.7
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	29.8	13.3	16.3	26.6	32.1	7.1	9.3	6.2
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	16.5	11.2	23.7	16.4	12.3	2.0	6.2	2.1
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	4.1	3.1	3.1	2.1	2.0	1.0	-	1.0
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	7.2	4.1	7.2	4.1	2.1	1.0	-	-
<b>\$200+</b>	8.2	2.0	5.1	2.0	3.1	1.0	1.0	1.0

VFR hosts in the regional areas, however, spent slightly more on entertaining their relatives than VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas, as shown in Table 4.46. There were no differences regarding expenditure as most hosts frequently spent within AU\$1-AU\$50 in total across different categories.

**Table 4.46: Expenses of Hosting VRs by the Hosts in the Regional Areas (whole visit)**

Cost (In Australian \$)	Areas							
	Grc %	Shp %	Rst %	Lqr %	Fuel %	PA %	Ent %	Othrs %
<b>None</b>	23.7	63.9	37.1	48.5	42.3	78.4	79.4	90.7
<b>\$1-\$50</b>	26.7	15.5	24.5	28.9	31.9	12.4	14.3	4.1
<b>\$51-\$100</b>	20.6	14.4	14.5	14.5	14.3	4.1	4.1	2.0
<b>\$101-\$150</b>	6.2	-	7.2	4.1	5.2	2.0	1.0	-
<b>\$151-\$200</b>	7.2	4.1	10.3	1.0	1.0	2.1	1.0	1.0
<b>\$200+</b>	15.3	2.1	6.2	3.1	5.1	1.0	-	2.1

#### **4.5.5 INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY VFR HOSTS**

The online survey asked local resident hosts about the degree of importance/usage of different sources of information (both internal and external) through which they learn about local activities, attractions, festivals and events. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance/usage from a list of common internal and external information sources by using a four-point scale ranging from ‘not important source/not used’ to ‘very important source’. Table 4.47 presents the outcome relating to the importance/usage of the information sources through disaggregating between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts.

‘Personal Experience’ was the most important or used among all the given sources of information, indicated by both immigrant (70%) and non-immigrant (72%) VFR hosts. Regarding the external sources, the Internet was specified as the ‘most used’ source by immigrant hosts (50%) whereas non-immigrants stated WOM as ‘highly important’ (44%). ‘Brochure’ was specified as a ‘moderately important’ source by both groups. Immigrants also demonstrated moderate importance towards the Local Information Centre and Newspaper, but these were less important for non-immigrant hosts. ‘Radio’ was relatively less used than all other external sources.

**Table 4.47: Important Sources of Information between Immigrants and Non-immigrants**

Sources of Information	Level of Importance							
	Immigrant				Non-immigrant			
	NI/Used %	Slt %	Mod %	VI %	NI/Used %	Slt %	Mod %	VI %
<b>Personal Experience</b>	2.5 (n=04)	7.5 (n=12)	20.1 (n=32)	69.8 (n=111)	2.3 (n=04)	3.5 (n=6)	22.1 (n=38)	72.1 (n=124)
<b>WOM</b>	4.4 (n=07)	8.2 (n=13)	47.2 (n=75)	40.3 (n=64)	2.9 (n=05)	10.5 (n=18)	43.0 (n=74)	43.6 (n=75)
<b>Television</b>	18.2 (n=29)	34.0 (n=54)	36.5 (n=58)	11.3 (n=18)	18.6 (n=32)	37.8 (n=65)	34.3 (n=59)	9.3 (n=16)
<b>Radio</b>	25.8 (n=41)	37.7 (n=60)	28.9 (n=46)	7.5 (n=12)	23.3 (n=40)	39.0 (n=67)	30.2 (n=52)	7.6 (n=13)
<b>Newspaper</b>	21.4 (n=34)	31.4 (n=50)	34.0 (n=54)	13.2 (n=21)	19.8 (n=34)	39.0 (n=67)	30.8 (n=53)	10.5 (n=18)
<b>Brochure</b>	12.6 (n=20)	32.7 (n=52)	39.6 (n=63)	15.1 (n=24)	19.2 (n=33)	34.3 (n=59)	35.5 (n=61)	11.0 (n=19)
<b>Internet</b>	5.7 (n=09)	13.8 (n=22)	30.8 (n=49)	49.7 (n=79)	8.7 (n=15)	14.0 (n=24)	43.6 (n=75)	33.7 (n=58)
<b>Information Centre</b>	12.6 (n=20)	23.9 (n=38)	41.5 (n=66)	22.0 (n=35)	25.6 (n=44)	30.8 (n=53)	29.1 (n=50)	14.5 (n=25)

VI: Very important; Mod=Moderate; Slt: Slightly; NI/Used: Not important/Used

Table 4.48 presents the results related to the Importance of Information Sources through disaggregating the hosts between metropolitan and regional areas. Similar to the results for immigrant and non-immigrant hosts, the table indicates Personal Experience as the most important source both in metropolitan and regional areas. ‘WOM’ was indicated as moderately important by the majority of hosts in the metropolitan areas (39%), whereas the Internet was indicated as moderately important by the majority of hosts in the regional areas (45%). ‘Radio’ was indicated as the slightly important source by the majority of hosts in both metropolitan and regional areas.



**Table 4.48: Important Sources of Information between Hosts in Metropolitan and Regional areas**

Sources of Information	Level of Importance							
	Metropolitan				Regional			
	NI/Used %	Slt %	Mod %	VI %	NI/Used %	Slt %	Mod %	VI %
<b>Personal Experience</b>	2.6 (n=6)	7.3 (n=17)	19.2 (n=45)	70.9 (n=166)	2.1 (n=2)	1.0 (n=1))	25.8 (n=25)	71.1 (n=69)
<b>WOM</b>	4.7 (n=11)	35.0 (n=82)	38.5 (n=90)	8.5 (n=20)	1.0 (n=1)	8.2 (n=8)	43.3 (n=42)	47.4 (n=46)
<b>Television</b>	17.9 (n=42)	35.0 (n=82)	38.5 (n=90)	8.5 (n=20)	19.6 (n=19)	38.1 (n=37)	27.8 (n=27)	14.4 (n=14)
<b>Radio</b>	24.8 (n=58)	38.0 (n=89)	32.1 (n=75)	5.1 (n=12)	23.7 (n=23)	39.2 (n=38)	23.7 (n=23)	13.4 (n=13)
<b>Newspaper</b>	22.6 (n=53)	35.0 (n=82)	31.6 (n=74)	10.7 (n=25)	15.5 (n=15)	36.1 (n=35)	34.0 (n=33)	14.4 (n=14)
<b>Brochure</b>	17.9 (n=42)	33.8 (n=79)	38.0 (n=89)	10.3 (n=24)	11.3 (n=11)	33.0 (n=32)	36.1 (n=35)	19.6 (n=19)
<b>Internet</b>	4.7 (n=11)	15.0 (n=35)	34.2 (n=80)	46.2 (n=108)	13.4 (n=13)	11.3 (n=11)	45.4 (n=44)	29.9 (n=29)
<b>Information Centre</b>	20.9 (n=49)	27.8 (n=65)	34.6 (n=81)	16.7 (n=39)	15.5 (n=15)	26.8 (n=26)	36.1 (n=35)	21.6 (n=21)

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter reported the descriptive results from the online survey based on the participant VFR hosts' responses regarding trip characteristics, decisions and activities of their VFR travel parties, in addition to decisions and activities undertaken while hosting VFRs. The descriptive analysis of the quantitative data, as presented in this chapter, demonstrated differences in various aspects of hosting VFRs among immigrant and non-immigrant hosts; between the hosts in metropolitan and regional destinations and between hosting friends and hosting relatives. The statistical significance and interpretation of these differences are presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: QUANTITATIVE DATA- INFERENCEAL ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

As mentioned previously, the objective of the quantitative research in this study was to examine the differences in the role of VFR hosts based on their migration status (whether they were born in Australia or overseas) and their length of stay in Australia, relationship with VFRs (VFs versus VRs) and destination characteristics (metropolitan versus regional), and accordingly addresses Research Objectives Three to Six. The previous section reported the differences in trip characteristics and subsequent decisions and activities within VFR travel through descriptive analysis. This chapter reports the statistical significance of those descriptive results.

This chapter initially reports on the inferential analysis that was undertaken to test the statistical significance of the differences identified through the descriptive analysis (Section 5.2). Following this, the analysis testing the factorability and differences of the importance/usage of information sources is presented (Section 5.3). The next section reports the findings of the inferential analysis that tested the associations among the variables related to VFR hosts and their travel parties (Section 5.4). This chapter then ends with a summary of the findings of the quantitative research of the study (Section 5.5), and a conclusion (Section 5.6).

### **5.2 INFERENCEAL ANALYSIS: TESTING FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES**

The statistical significance of differences in VFR trip characteristics, decisions and activities were based on the country of birth (Research Objective Three) and immigration status (Research Objective Four) of VFR hosts, the relationship status between the hosts and visitors (Research Objective Five) and the type of destinations where hosts live

(Research Objective Six). The following sections present the statistically significant differences found by this study relating to hosting VFRs.

### 5.2.1 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT VFR HOSTS: COUNTRY OF BIRTH (COB)

One-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was run to test the differences within VFR travel relating to choice of accommodation of VFRs, composition of VFR travel parties, duration of stay of VFRs, number of repeat visits of VFRs and expenses of hosting based on the COB of hosts. Table 5.1 below presents the MANOVAs outlining statistically significant differences in VFR travel based on the country of birth of hosts (i.e. whether the host was born in Australia or overseas). The finding (Table 5.1) suggests that the COB of VFR hosts had statistically significant relationships with the number of repeat visits of VFRs and expenses of hosting, as indicated in respective *p* values which are less than 0.05.

**Table 5.1: MANOVAs- Differences Based on Country of Birth of Hosts**

Variables Measured	Value	F	df	Error df	P	partial $\eta^2$
Choice of Accommodation	.999	.046	4	326	.996	.001
Composition of Travel Parties	.006	.336	6	324	.918.	.006
Duration of Stay	.998	.394	2	328	.675	.002
No. of Repeat Visits	.031	5.32	2	328	.005*	.031
Expenses	.102	1.96	18	312	.011*	.102

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

With regard to the total number of repeat visits of VFRs to the same hosts, the homogeneity of covariance assumption was violated (Box's  $M = 8.11$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ). Pillai's Trace value was therefore used to assess the differences between the host groups on the combined dependent variables of the number of repeat visits. There was a significant difference found between the immigrant and non-immigrant host groups on the combined dependent variables of the number of repeat visits,  $F(2, 328) = 5.327$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ; Pillai's Trace = .031; partial  $\eta^2 = .031$ .

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.025) were conducted regarding the significant differences of numbers of repeat visits. The homogeneity of variance assumption, in terms of repeat visitation, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was violated for the number of repeat visit of VRs ( $p=0.013$ ), but not for VFs ( $p=0.382$ ). The univariate ANOVA results indicated no statistically significant relationship between COB and number of repeat visit of VFs ( $F(1, 329) = 4.913$ ,  $p=0.054$ ). However, the differences in the number of repeat visits of VR travel parties between immigrants and non-immigrants were statistically significant with small effect size (Welch's  $F(1, 328.961) = 7.517$ ,  $p=0.012$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.022$ ). The non-immigrant hosts ( $M=4.87$ ,  $SD = 4.69$ ) reported higher frequency of repeat visits from VRs than immigrant hosts ( $M= 3.50$ ,  $SD = 4.38$ ).

Regarding the volume of expenses incurred by VFR hosts while hosting VFRs, the homogeneity of covariance assumption was also violated (Box's  $M = 298.445$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Pillai's Trace value was therefore used to assess the differences between the host groups on the combined dependent variables of the volume of expenses for hosting their VFRs. There was a significant difference found between the two host groups on the combined dependent variables related to expenses,  $F(18, 312) = 1.965$ ,  $p=0.011$ ; Pillai's Trace = 0.102; partial  $\eta^2 = 0.102$ .

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.002) were conducted regarding the significant differences in expenses of hosting. The homogeneity of variance assumption regarding expenses, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was violated for the paid attractions with both friends ( $p=0.022$ ) and relatives ( $p=0.000$ ). Entertainment ( $p=0.015$ ) and other miscellaneous expenses ( $p=0.000$ ) while hosting only relatives. The univariate ANOVA test results show no significant differences

between the immigrant and non-immigrant host groups in terms of expenses in any of the areas except for miscellaneous expenses with VRs with small effect size (Welch's  $F(1, 253.002) = 13.261$ ,  $p_b = 0.00$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.003$ ). Immigrant hosts reported higher expenditure ( $M = 0.41$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) in miscellaneous items than that of non-immigrants ( $M = 0.12$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ).

Moreover, the chi-square test on the relationship between COB and the main purpose of visits of VFRs who visited them found a statistically significant relationship with small effect size as indicated,  $X^2(df) = 7.32(1)$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ;  $\Phi = 0.12$ ). The VFR main purpose of visits was reported higher with VFRs who visited the non-immigrant hosts (56%) whereas the non-VFR main purpose of visits was higher among VFRs who visited the immigrant hosts (56%).

### 5.2.2 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT VFR HOSTS: IMMIGRATION STATUS

The statistically significant relationship between the immigration status (i.e. between hosts who have migrated 1-10 years ago, 10+ years and who was born in Australia) of VFR hosts and VFR travel was examined through one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Table 5.2 reports the results of the MANOVAs. Similar to COBs, immigration status demonstrated statistically significant relationships with the number of repeat visits of VFRs and expenses of hosting, as indicated in the respective p values ( $p < 0.05$ ) presented in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: MANOVAs- Differences Based on Immigration Status**

Variables Measured	Value	F	df	Error df	P	partial $\eta^2$
Choice of accommodation	.992	.311	8	650	.962	.004
Composition of Travel Parties	.024	.647	12	648	.802	.012
Duration of Stay	.984	1.361	4	654	.246	.008
No. of Repeat Visits	.066	5.571	4	656	.000*	.033
Expenses	.198	1.901	36	624	.001*	.099

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

Regarding the total number of repeat visits of VFRs to the same hosts, the homogeneity of covariance assumption was violated (Box's  $M = 15.22$ ,  $p = 0.020$ ). Pillai's Trace value was therefore used to assess the differences between the host groups on the combined dependent variables of numbers of repeat visits. There was a significant difference found between the immigrant and non-immigrant host groups on the combined dependent variables of the number of repeat visits,  $F(4, 656) = 5.571$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ; Pillai's Trace = .066; partial  $\eta^2 = .033$ .

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.025) were conducted regarding the significant differences of numbers of repeat visits. The homogeneity of variance assumption, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was violated for both VFs ( $p = 0.000$ ) and VRs ( $p = 0.000$ ). The differences in the number of repeat visits of VF travel parties between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts (based on their immigration status) were statistically significant with small effect size (Welch's  $F(2, 154.232) = 9.553$ ,  $p_b = 0.000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.040$ ).

Tukey post-hoc tests showed statistically significant differences ( $p = .009$ ) between immigrant hosts of 1-10 years and immigrant hosts of 10+ years and also with the non-immigrants ( $p = .001$ ). But no statistically significant difference reported between immigrant hosts of 10+ years and who was born in Australia ( $p = .804$ ). Immigrant hosts of 1-10 years reported smaller numbers of repeat visits ( $M = 0.21$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ) from their VFs than the immigrants of 10+ years ( $M = 0.42$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ) and non-immigrants ( $M = 0.45$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ).

The differences in the number of repeat visits of VR travel parties between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts (based on their immigration status) were also statistically significant with small effect size (Welch's  $F(2, 153.403) = 8.026$ ,  $p_b = 0.000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.036$ ). Tukey post-hoc tests showed no statistically significant difference ( $p = .072$ ) between immigrant

hosts of 1-10 years and immigrant hosts of 10+ years but showed a statistically significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) with the hosts who were born in Australia. Immigrant hosts who have migrated 1-10 years ago reported lesser numbers of repeat visits ( $M=2.40$ ,  $SD=3.67$ ) from their VR travel parties than that of immigrants of 10+ years ( $M=4.07$ ,  $SD=4.62$ ) and non-immigrant hosts ( $M=4.87$ ,  $SD=4.69$ ).

Regarding the volume of expenses incurred by VFR hosts, the homogeneity of covariance assumption was also violated (Box's  $M = 528.520$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Pillai's Trace value was therefore used to assess the differences between the host groups on the combined dependent variables of the volume of expenses. There was a statistically significant difference found between the hosts groups on the combined dependent variables related to expenses,  $F (36, 624) = 1.901$ ,  $p=0.001$ ; Pillai's Trace = 0.198; partial  $\eta^2 = 0.099$ .

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.002) were conducted. The homogeneity of variance assumption in terms of volume of expenses, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was violated for the paid attractions, entertainments and other expenses with both friends ( $p= .025$ ; .016; .047 respectively) and relatives ( $p=.000$ ; .000; .000 respectively). Shopping ( $p=.002$ ) and restaurant ( $p=0.004$ ) were violated while hosting only relatives.

The univariate ANOVA test results show no statistically significant differences for any of the items of expenses except for other miscellaneous expenses while hosting VRs with small effect size (Welch's  $F (2, 114.915) = 6.654$ ,  $p_b= 0.036$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.044$ ). In this regard, the Tukey post-hoc tests showed that non-immigrant hosts were significantly different from both immigrant hosts of 1-10 years ( $p=.002$ ) and immigrant hosts of 10+ years ( $p=.017$ ). Immigrant hosts reported lower expenditures ( $M= 0.12$ ,  $SD= 0.51$ ) in

miscellaneous items than from the non-immigrant hosts (1-10 years:  $M = 0.50$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ; 10plus=  $M = 0.36$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ).

The chi-square test, on the other hand, found a statistically significant difference with small effect size:  $X^2 (df) = 7.34 (2)$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ;  $\Phi = 0.12$ ), between the immigration status of VFR hosts and the main purpose of visits of VFRs. This study reported the VFR purpose of visits was highest among the non-immigrants (56%), followed by the immigrant hosts who had been migrated for 10-plus years (30%) and immigrants of 1to10 years (14%).

### 5.2.3 METROPOLITAN VERSUS REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

Table 5.3 below presents the MANOVAs outlining the differences within VFR travel based on the types of destination (metropolitan versus regional) of hosts. This finding (Table 5.3) suggests that the destination of hosts have statistically significant relationships with the composition and duration/length of stay of VFR travel parties (as  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5.3: MANOVAs- Differences Based on the Destinations**

Variables Measured	Value	F	df	Error df	P	partial $\eta^2$
Choice of Accommodation	.993	.575	4	326	.681	.007
Composition of Travel Parties	.041	2.321	6	324	.033*	.041
Duration of Stay	.972	4.738	2	328	.009*	.028
No. of Repeat Visitation	.991	1.540	2	328	.216	.009
Expenses	.070	1.301	18	312	.184	.070

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

There was a significant difference found between the destination of hosts and composition of the travel parties,  $F (6, 324) = 2.321$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ; Pillai's Trace = 0.041; partial  $\eta^2 = 0.041$ . Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.008) were conducted regarding the significant differences in the composition of VFR travel parties. The homogeneity of variance assumption regarding the composition of travel parties, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was only violated for numbers of children in VR travel parties ( $p = 0.000$ ). The univariate ANOVA test results indicated that there was



no statistically significant difference between the destination of hosts and composition of VF travel parties.

There was a statistically significant difference also reported between destinations of hosts with the total group size of VR travel parties with small effect size,  $F(1, 329) = 9.401$ ,  $p_b = 0.012$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.028$ . The hosts in the regional areas had a higher mean value ( $M = .501$ ,  $SD = .255$ ) regarding the group size of their VR travel parties than the hosts in the metropolitan areas ( $M = .410$ ,  $SD = .243$ ).

There was a statistically significant difference reported for the number of children with small effect size (Welch's  $F(1, 142.285) = 8.701$ ,  $p_b = 0.032$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.032$ ), but not with the number of adults in the VR travel parties. The number of children in the VR travel parties was reported higher by the hosts living in the regional areas ( $M = .191$ ,  $SD = .255$ ) than the hosts from the major metropolitan cities ( $M = .106$ ,  $SD = .190$ ).

In respect to the duration of stay of VFR travel parties, a statistically significant difference was found between destination of hosts on the combined dependent variables of duration of stay,  $F(2, 328) = 4.738$ ,  $p = .009$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .972$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .028$ . Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.025) showed no statistically significant difference between destinations of the hosts and duration of the stay for VF travel parties ( $F(1, 329) = 0.301$ ,  $p_b = 1$ ). However, there was a statistically significant difference found between destinations of hosts and duration of stay of VR travel parties with small effect size,  $F(1, 329) = 9.401$ ,  $p_b = 0.004$ . The hosts in regional destinations reported longer duration of stay of their VR travel parties ( $M = .501$ ,  $SD = .255$ ) than from the hosts in the metropolitan destinations ( $M = .410$ ,  $SD = .243$ ).

The chi-square test also showed a significant relationship between the destination of hosts and the main purpose of visits of the visitors with small effect size,  $X^2 (df)= 4.06 (2), p= 0.04; \Phi = 0.09$ ). This study demonstrated that VFRs in the metropolitan areas had a higher percentage of the non-VFR purpose of visit (76%) whereas the VFR purpose of visits was higher among the VFRs who had visited the hosts in the regional destinations (33%).

#### 5.2.4 VFs VERSUS VRs

Table 5.4 presents the results of MANOVAs demonstrating the statistically significant differences between hosting VFs and hosting VRs. There was a statistically significant difference found between hosts who had hosted VFs and hosts who had hosted VRs on the combined dependent variables of choice of accommodations,  $F(2, 659) = 20.404, p = .000$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .942$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .058$ .

**Table 5.4: MANOVAs- Differences between Friends and Relatives**

Variables Measured	Value	F	df	Error df	P	partial $\eta^2$
<b>Choice of Accommodation</b>	.942	20.404	2	659	.000*	.058
<b>Composition of Travel Parties</b>	.002	.498	3	658	.684	.002
<b>Volume of expenses</b>	.983	1.217	9	652	.281	.017

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha$  level of 0.025) were conducted regarding the significant differences of choice of accommodation of VFRs. The univariate ANOVA test results indicate that there was no statistically significant relationship between VFs and VRs hosts regarding staying in commercial accommodation in this study,  $F(1, 660) = .521, p_b=0.97$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .001$ ). However, there was a significant relationship reported between hosts who had hosted VFs and who had hosted VRs in respect of hosting at home with small effect size,  $F(1, 660) = 32.602, p_b=0.000$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .047$ ). The number of VR travel parties hosted at home was higher ( $M = 0.402, SD = 0.255$ ) than from the number of VF travel parties stayed in host's accommodation ( $M = 0.291, SD = 0.244$ ).

Table 5.5 below, on the other hand, presents the ANOVAs outlining the differences of the duration of stay and number of repeat visits of VFR travel parties based on the relationship status between hosts and visitors.

**Table 5.5: ANOVAs- Differences between VFs and VRs**

Variables Measured	VFs		VRs		ANOVA		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> ( <i>df</i> )	<i>p</i>	partial $\eta^2$
<b>Duration of Stay</b>	.537	.373	.437	.249	16.558 (1,575.778)	.000*	.024
<b>No. of Repeat Visitation</b>	.407	.423	4.22	4.59	226.189 (1, 335.605)	.000*	.255

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

Regarding duration of stay of VF travel parties reported higher mean value ( $M = 0.537$ ,  $SD = 0.373$ ) than the VR travel parties ( $M = 0.437$ ,  $SD = 0.249$ ). The homogeneity of variance assumption of the duration of stay of the travel parties, as assessed by Levene's test found that assumption was violated ( $p=0.000$ ). The ANOVA test results indicated that the relationship status between hosts and visitors had a statistically significant relationship with the duration of stay of VFR travel parties with small effect size, Welch's  $F$  (575.778) = 16.558,  $p= 0.000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.024$ .

In terms of number of repeat visits to the same hosts, VR travel parties showed higher mean value ( $M = 4.220$ ,  $SD = 4.593$ ) than the VF travel parties ( $M = 0.407$ ,  $SD = 0.423$ ). The homogeneity of variance assumption in regards to the number of repeat visits of VFR travel parties, as demonstrated by Levene's test that the assumption was violated ( $p=0.000$ ). The ANOVA test results indicate that the relationship between relationship status between hosts and visitors and the number of repeat visits of VFR travel parties was statistically significant with large effect size, Welch's  $F$  (1, 335.605) = 226.189,  $p= 0.000$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.255$ .

The chi-square showed a significant statistical relationship between the relationship status and main purpose of visits of VFRs with a small effect size as indicated by  $X^2 (df) = 14.09 (1), p = 0.00; \Phi = 0.17$ ). This study found that VFs had the higher percentage (59%) of non-VFR purposes of visits than from VRs (42%). Whereas, VRs had a higher (57%) percentage of VFR purpose of visits than the VFs (41%).

### **5.3 IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SOURCES**

Factor analysis was conducted to assess underlying latent variables associated with the local residents' evaluation of importance/usage of different information sources. This section starts with reporting the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) outlining the identification of an appropriate factorial model (Section 5.3.1) and after that reports the outcome of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) assessing the validity of the identified factorial model (Section 5.3.2). The statistical significance of differences among the variables of the final selected model was tested through T-test (when there are two within-group variables) and ANOVA (when there are more than two within-group variables) and presented in section 5.3.2.

#### **5.3.1 EFA RESULTS**

The factorability of all the eight information sources considered in this study was examined for selecting latent variables to be included in subsequent analysis. Initially, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run on the information source items. The correlation matrix showed that all the eight items were correlated at least .3 with at least one other item. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .814, above the recommended value of .6 according to Kaiser (1974), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2 (28) = 784.518, p < 0.01$ ). The commonalities among the items were reported

above .3 (Table 5.6), which was further confirmed that each item shared some common variance with other items.

EFA with oblique rotation was used to assess the scale's factor structure. Factors were retained based on the Kaiser-Guttman eigenvalue criterion (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960, 1974), Cattell scree test (Cattell, 1966) and the theoretical meaningfulness of the factors. EFA revealed two factors that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 43% and 15% of the total variance, respectively (Table 5.6). Visual inspection of the scree plot indicated that two factors should be retained (Cattell, 1966). In addition, a rotated two-factor solution met the interpretability criterion. As such, two factors were retained. Oblique rotation was justified due to the high correlation between factors ( $r = .5$ )

One item, the visitor information centre was deleted from the original solution. The Oblimin and Kaiser normalisation rotation method showed that (Table 5.6) all the items of the original model (i.e. two factors with eight items) having primary factor loading of .4 or above and no cross loading of .3 or above except with one item (visitor information centre), which primary factor loading is less than .4 and also showed a cross loading of .3 between the two factors. Following the deletion of visitor information centre, another iteration of the EFA was undertaken.

**Table 5.6: Factor Loadings for EFA with Oblique Rotation for the Information Source Importance Scale (Original Solution)**

Item	Factor Loading		Commonality
	1	2	
Television	.786		.571
Radio	.754		.555
Newspaper	.681		.460
Brochure	.602		.614
Information Centre	.335	.309	.311
Personal Experience (Squared)		.657	.364
Internet		.488	.319
Word-of-mouth		.472	.322
Eigenvalues	3.455	1.17	
% of variance	43.18	14.73	

Note: Factor loadings < .3 are not shown

Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Solution converged in 6 iterations

The next iteration of the EFA (i.e. by excluding the visitor information centre) showed a clear factor structure model of two factors with seven items (refer Table 5.7 below). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .8, above the recommended value of .6 according to Kaiser (1974), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2(21) = 657.28, p < 0.01$ ). The commonalities among the items were reported (see Table 5.7) above .3, which was further confirmed that each items shared some common variance with other items.

EFA with oblique rotation was used to assess the scale's factor structure. Following the same criteria as the first solution (such as eigenvalues, scree plot, and theoretical meaningfulness), factors of the final solution were retained. EFA revealed two factors that had eigenvalues greater than one and which explained 45% and 17% of the total variance, respectively (refer Table 5.7). Visual inspection of the scree plot indicated that two factors should be retained. Moreover, a rotated two-factor solution also met the interpretability criterion. Oblique rotation was justified due to the high correlation between factors ( $r = .5$ ).

There was no item deleted from the final solution item. The Oblimin and Kaiser normalisation rotation method showed that (see Table 5.7) each of the items in the modified model loaded only onto one factor at higher than .4 (ranges from .466 to .801). There was no cross loading of .3 between two factors and there was no factor having fewer than three items.

**Table 5.7: Factor Loadings for EFA with Oblique Rotation for the Information Source Importance Scale (Final Solution)**

Item	Factor Loading		Commonality
	1	2	
Television	.801		.600
Radio	.752		.565
Newspaper	.678		.449
Brochure	.630		.554
Personal Experience (squared)		.776	.523
Word-of-mouth		.466	.343
Internet		.379	.253
Eigenvalues	3.13	1.17	
% of variance	44.80	16.81	

Note: Factor loadings < .3 are not shown  
Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization  
Solution converged in 5 iterations

The first group of items in the final solution was labelled as the traditional factor as it includes traditional sources such as television, radio, newspaper and brochure. The second group of items attributed as the social factor given that it includes personal experience, word-of-mouth and the Internet. Following the EFA, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each factor identified (see Table 5.8 below). The results showed that alpha ( $\alpha = .817$ ) was acceptable ( $\alpha > .7$ ) (Cronbach, 1951), for the traditional factor but not for social factor ( $\alpha = .327$ ). Therefore the reliability of the social factor was not established in the current study and this factor was excluded in subsequent analyses.

**Table 5.8: Reliability Statistics of the Two Latent Factors**

Factor	No. of Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Traditional	4	.817
Social	3	.327

### 5.3.2 CFA RESULTS

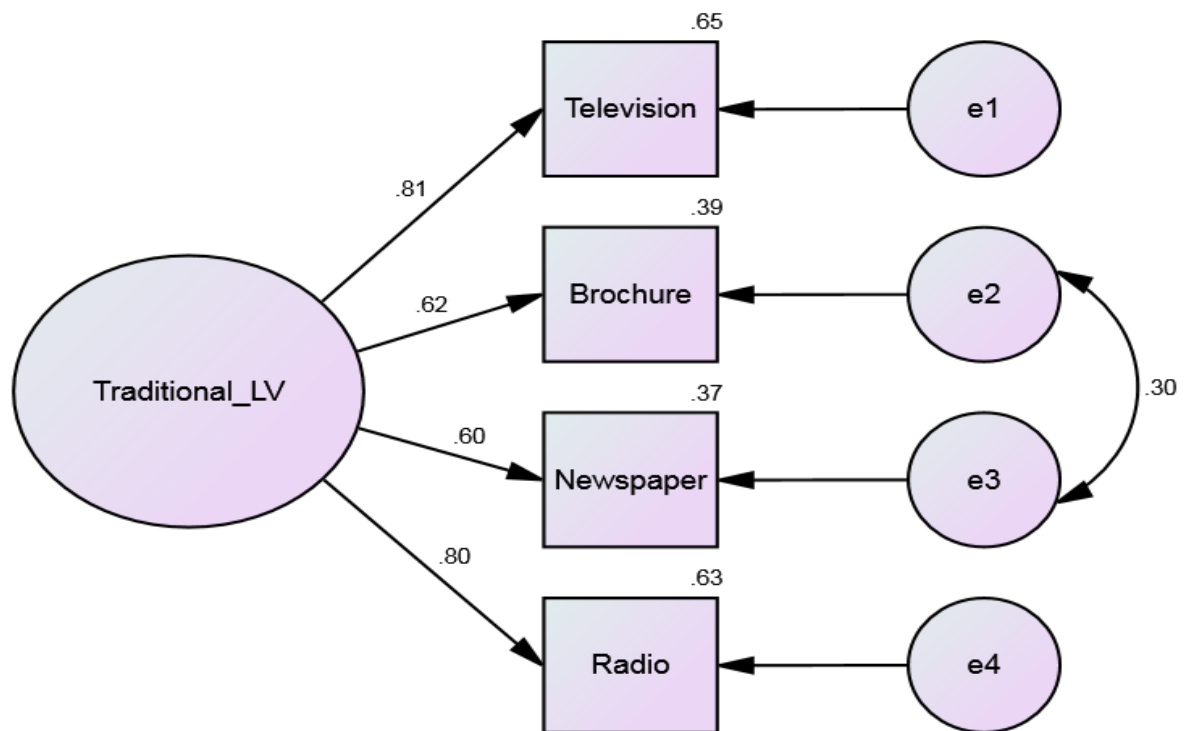
As the reliability of traditional factorial model was confirmed, confirmatory factor analysis was run to further assess the model fit of the traditional factor measurements. Table 5.9 shows Goodness-of-Fit indices of the default model (Model-1) and an alternative model (Model-2). In Table 5.9, chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) shows absolute fit index, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), as comparative fit indices. These indices were included following the recommendations of T. Brown (2014) to assess model fit. Table 5.9 shows that Model 1 (the final solution of the EFA) did not meet all the recommended standards of model-fit with the dataset. The  $\chi^2(2) = 24.10$ ;  $p < .001$ ; the RMSEA = .183 (close to 0.06 or less is acceptable); CFI = .951 (0.95 or greater is accepted); and TLI = 0.854 (close to 0.95 or greater is acceptable). Therefore, modification indices and standard residuals were examined, which suggested a model modification by allowing a covariance between error items e2 (Brochure) and e3 (Newspaper) (see Figure 5.1, visually presents the modified model with loadings). The covariance of the error terms for these items was logical because they both relate to print media. Table 4.57 shows that Model-2 met all the criteria of the Goodness-of-Fit indices as:  $\chi^2(1) = 24.102$ ,  $p = 0.128$ ; RMSEA = 0.063; CFI = 0.997 and TLI = 0.983 and provided a significantly better Model fit with the data ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 21.79$ ,  $p < .001$ )



**Table 5.9: Goodness-of-Fit Indices of Models for Importance of Information Sources (N=331)**

Model	$\chi^2$	df	p	$\Delta X^2$	$\Delta p$ -value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMSEA < 0.05	Note
Model-1	24.102	2	0	-	-	.951	.854	.183	0	Default model
Model-2	2.317	1	.128	21.785	.000	.997	.983	.063	.277	correlated errors between brochure and newspaper

**Figure 5.1: Measuring Importance of Traditional Information Sources Model**



### 5.3.3 ASSOCIATION WITH HOSTS' CHARACTERISTICS

As the model-fit of the traditional factor measurement in this study was confirmed, an independent-sample T-test was run examining the effects of country of birth, destination and relationship (because of two within-group variables). Table 5.10 presents the results of the relationship between the variable as assessed through T-tests. T-tests showed no statistical significant differences between importance of the traditional information sources

and country of birth, destinations and relationship:  $t(329) = -.797, p = .426$ ;  $t(329) = -1.27, p = .205$ ;  $t(660) = -.000, p = 1.00$ , respectively.

**Table 5.10: Differences Based on COB, Destination and Relationship**

Variable	$t(df)$	$p$	Cohen's $d$
Country of Birth	-.797 (329)	.426	0.08
Destination	-1.27 (329)	.205	0.14
Relationship	.000 (660)	1.00	0.00

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

Moreover, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run examining the effect of immigration status (as consisted three within group variables). The ANOVA result (Table 5.11) similarly showed no statistically significant difference between the immigration status of hosts and importance of the traditional information sources as  $F(2,328) = .443, p = .643$ . So this study suggests (Table 5.10 & Table 5.11) that there was no difference among hosts regarding the perceived importance of the traditional information sources.

**Table 5.11: Differences Based on Immigration Status**

Variable	ANOVA		
	$F(df)$	$p$	partial $\eta^2$
Immigration Status	.443 (2, 328)	.643	.003

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

## 5.4 INFERENCE ANALYSIS: TESTING FOR ASSOCIATION

The previous sections reported the statistically significant differences between host groups in terms of trip characteristics of their VFR travel parties and the decisions and activities within those travel parties. This section report the findings of the inferential analysis that tested the association among the variables. The objective was to examine the extent of influence of different characteristics of VFR hosts on individual VFR travel decisions and activities. As previously discussed in Chapter-3: Research Methodology and Method, estimation models were developed and tested through regression analysis in order to

examine the impact of host's characteristics on individual decisions and activities within VFR travel: group size, duration of stay, number of repeat visit, total expenses, number of VFR travel parties stay with hosts and number of VFR travel parties stay in the commercial accommodation. The following sections present the findings of those regression analysis.

#### **5.4.1 GROUP SIZE**

An ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis was run. As indicated below in Model 1 that the group size of VFR hosts was measured by country of birth (Australia vs overseas), immigration status (1-10 years vs 10 + years), destination (metropolitan vs regional), number of beds and family members of hosts alongside with the main purpose of visit of VFRs and relationship status (VF vs VR).

##### **Model 1:**

$$\text{Group Size} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_7 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

The finding of the regression analysis of the Model-1 indicated that there was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals against predicted values. There was also some correlation between residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.47, which was within the acceptable range of between 1-3 (Field, 2009). There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were five cases identified as outliers (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). These cases were retained as there was no theoretical basis for their removal. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. The multiple regression Model 1 statistically significantly predicted group size of travel parties,  $F(7, 532) = 3.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 0.03$ . Three variables,

destination ( $\beta = -.127$ ), main purpose of visit ( $\beta = -.097$ ) and number of family members ( $\beta = .091$ ), made a statistically significant condition explaining group size,  $p < .05$ . Table 5.12 below presented the summary of the regression analysis of host's characteristics on group size of VFR travel parties

As can be seen from the beta weights in Table 5.12, destination= metropolitan vs regional ( $\beta = -.127$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and main purpose= non-VFR vs VFR ( $\beta = -.097$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ) had significant negative regression weights, indicating participants in metropolitan areas or non-VFR purpose generally had smaller travel parties, after controlling for the other variables in the model (a suppressor effect). The number of the family members measure, has a significant positive weight ( $\beta = 0.091$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), indicating that after accounting for other variables in the model, participants with more family members hosted larger travel parties. The other four independent variables (i.e. country of birth, immigration status, relationship status and number of beds) did not contribute statistically significantly to the regression Model 1.

**Table 5.12: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Group Size of Travel Parties**

Variables	B	SEB	$\beta$
Country of Birth= Born in Australia	-.003	.018	-.008
Immigration Status=1-10 years	.006	.025	.013
Destination= Metropolitan	-.051	.081	-.127*
Relationship Status= VF	.014	.016	.037
Main Purpose= non-VFR	-.037	.017	-.097*
Number of Beds	.014	.009	.069
Number of Family Members	.012	.006	.091*

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

#### 5.4.2 DURATION OF STAY

To estimate the duration of stay from hosts' characteristics (i.e. country of birth, immigration status, destination, number of beds and family members, the main purpose of visits and relationship status) an ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis was conducted, as demonstrated in Model-2 below.

##### **Model 2:**

$$\text{Duration of stay} = \beta_o + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

The analysis of Model-2 suggested that there was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals against predicted values. There was some correlation in the model's residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 0.002, suggesting that the results should be interpreted with caution. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were two cases identified as outliers (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). These cases were retained as there was no theoretical basis for their removal. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by Q-Q Plot. The multiple regression Model-2 statistically significantly predicted the duration of stay of travel parties,  $F(7, 532) = 9.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 0.10$ . Two variables, Destination ( $\beta = -.088$  and relationship status ( $\beta = .306$ ) made a statistically significant condition explaining duration of stay,  $p < .05$ . The summary of the regression analysis of estimating the duration of stay is shown in Table 5.13.

As can be seen from the beta weights in Table 5.13, destination= metropolitan vs regional ( $\beta = -.088$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ) had significant negative regression weight, indicating participants in

metropolitan areas generally had lower duration of stay from their VFRs, after controlling for the other variables in the model (a suppressor effect). On the other hand, the relationship status= VF vs VR measure had a significant positive weight ( $\beta = .306, p = 0.00$ ), indicating that after accounting for other variables in the model, participants had a longer duration of stay from their VFs. The other five independent variables (i.e. immigration status, born in Australia, main purpose, number of beds and family members) did not contribute statistically significantly to the regression Model-2.

**Table 5.13: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Duration of Stay of Travel Parties**

Variables	B	SEB	$\beta$
COB= Born in Australia	.017	.031	.033
Immigration Status=10 plus	.036	.032	.068
Destination= Metropolitan	-.048	.023	-.088*
Relationship Status= VF	.153	.021	.306*
Main Purpose= non-VFR	.023	.022	.045
Number of Beds	-.005	.012	-.019
Number of Family Members	.014	.008	.076

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

### 5.4.3 NUMBER OF REPEAT VISITS

An ordinary least squares multiple regression was run to estimate the number of repeat visits of VFR travel parties, as demonstrated below in Model-3.

#### **Model 3:**

No. of Repeat Visits =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_7 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$

There was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals against predicted values. There was some correlation between residuals as assessed by a

Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.94 (within the acceptable range of 1 to 3). There was a homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were two cases identified as outliers (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). These cases were retained as there was no theoretical basis for their removal. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. The regression model statistically significantly predicted the number of repeat visits of travel parties,  $F(7, 532) = 42.50, p < 0.00, \text{adj. } R^2 = 0.35$ . Four variables, COB ( $\beta = .176$ ), immigration status ( $\beta = .115$ ), relationship status ( $\beta = -.539$ ), main purpose of visit ( $\beta = -.144$ ), made a statistically significant condition explaining number of repeat visit,  $p < .05$ . Regression coefficients and standard errors of the analysis of Model-3 are presented in Table 5.14, below.

As can be seen from the beta weights in Table 5.14, COB = Australia vs. Overseas ( $\beta = .176, p = 0.00$ ) and immigration status = 1-10 years vs. 10+ years ( $\beta = .115, p = 0.03$ ) had significant positive regression weights, indicating participants born overseas or have been immigrated for 10+ years had higher number of repeat visits from their VFRs, after controlling for the other variables in the model. Whereas the relationship status = VF vs VR ( $\beta = -.539, p = 0.00$ ) and main purpose of visit = non-VFR vs VFR ( $\beta = -.144, p = 0.00$ ) measures had significant negative weights ( $\beta = 0.09, p = 0.05$ ), indicating that after accounting for other variables in the model, participants generally had higher numbers of repeat visits from their friends or who had non-VFR purpose of visit (a suppressor effect). The other three independent variables (i.e. destination, number of beds and family members) did not contribute statistically significantly to the regression Model-3.

**Table 5.14: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Number of Repeat Visit of Travel Parties**

Variables	B	SEB	B
<b>COB= Born in Australia</b>	1.406	.418	.176*
<b>Immigration status=10 plus</b>	.982	.437	.115*
<b>Destination= Metropolitan</b>	-.086	.313	-.010
<b>Relationship Status=VF</b>	-4.311	.282	-.539*
<b>Main Purpose= non-VFR</b>	-1.193	.294	-.144*
<b>Number of Beds</b>	.238	.164	.054
<b>Number of Family Members</b>	-.040	.111	-.014

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

#### **5.4.4 TOTAL ADDED EXPENSES OF HOSTING VFRs**

According to the Model-4 below, an ordinary least squares multiple regression analysis was run to estimate the group size from the country of birth, immigration status, destination, number of beds and family members of hosts and the main purpose of visit and relationship status.

##### **Model 4:**

$$\text{Total Expenditure} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_7 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

The regression analysis based on Model-4 showed that there was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals against predicted values. There was some correlation between residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.83 (within the acceptable range of 1-3). There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were 21 cases identified as outliers (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). These cases were retained as there was no theoretical basis for their removal.



The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by Q-Q Plot. The regression model statistically significantly predicted total expenses of hosting VFRs,  $F(7, 532) = 5.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , adj.  $R^2 = 0.058$ . Four variables, COB ( $\beta = -.191$ ), immigration status ( $\beta = -.182$ ), destination ( $\beta = -.121$ ), main purpose of visit ( $\beta = -.179$ ), made a statistically significant condition explaining explained variance in total added expenses,  $p < .05$ . Regression coefficients and standard errors of Model-4 are presented in Table 5.15.

The beta weights in Table 5.15 shows that, COB= Australia vs. Overseas ( $\beta = -.191$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), immigration Status= 1-10 years vs. 10 plus years ( $\beta = -.182$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), and main Purpose of visit= non-VFR vs. VFR ( $\beta = -.179$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) had significant negative regression weights, indicating participants who were born in Australia or immigrated 10+ years or had VFRs with non-VFR purpose had lower added expenses of hosting, after controlling for the other variables in the model (a suppressor effect). Whereas the destination ( $\beta = .121$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) measure had a significant positive weight, indicating that participants in the metropolitan areas had higher total added expenses of hosting VFRs. The other three independent variables (i.e. relationship status, number of beds and family members) did not contribute statistically significantly to the regression Model-4.

**Table 5.15: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Total Expenses of Hosting Travel Parties**

Variables	B	SEB	B
<b>COB= Born in Australia</b>	-.282	.093	-.191*
<b>Immigration status=10 plus</b>	-.287	.097	-.182*
<b>Destination= Metropolitan</b>	.196	.070	.121*
<b>Relationship Status= VF</b>	.050	.063	.034
<b>Main Purpose= non-VFR</b>	-.274	.065	-.179*
<b>Number of Beds</b>	-.007	.037	-.009
<b>Number of Family Members</b>	.033	.025	.061

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

#### 5.4.5 NUMBER OF VFRs STAYING WITH HOSTS

An Ordinary Least Squares multiple regression was run to estimate the degree of VFR travel parties staying in accommodation provided by hosts, as stipulated in Model-5 below.

##### **Model 5:**

$$\text{No. of VFR Travel Parties Stay With Host} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Country of Birth}_{(\text{born in Australia})} + \beta_2 \text{Immigration Status}_{(1-10 \text{ years})} + \beta_3 \text{Destination}_{(\text{metropolitan})} + \beta_4 \text{Relationship status}_{(\text{VF})} + \beta_5 \text{MP}_{(\text{non-VFR})} + \beta_6 \text{Number of Beds} + \beta_7 \text{Number of Family Members} + \varepsilon$$

The assessment of partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals of Model-5 demonstrated that there was linearity against predicted values. There was some correlation between residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.90 (within the acceptable range of 1-3). There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There was one case identified as outlier (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). The case was retained as there was no theoretical basis for removal. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. The regression model statistically significantly predicted the number of VFRs' stay with hosts,  $F(7, 532) = 4.65, p < 0.01, \text{adj. } R^2 = 0.045$ . Two variables, relationship status ( $\beta = .187$ ) and numbers of beds ( $\beta = .133$ ), made a statistically significant condition explaining number of VFRs stay with hosts,  $p < .05$ . The summary of the regression coefficients and standard errors of Model-5 is presented in Table 5.16.

As demonstrated in the beta weights in Table 5.16, relationship status= VF vs VR ( $\beta = -.187, p = 0.00$ ) had a significant negative regression weight, indicating participants had lower numbers of VFs stay with them when visit, after controlling for the other variables in the model (a suppressor effect). Whereas the number of bed measure had a significant

positive weight ( $\beta = .133$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), indicating that after accounting for other variables in the model, participants with more beds had higher numbers of VFRs stay with them when they visit. The other five independent variables (i.e. immigration status, born in Australia, destination, main purpose and family members) did not contribute statistically significantly to the regression Model-5.

**Table 5.16: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Number of VFRs Stay with Hosts**

Variables	B	SEB	B
COB= Born in Australia	-.033	.030	-.070
Immigration Status=10 plus	-.034	.031	-.068
Destination= Metropolitan	.012	.022	.022
Relationship Status=VF	-.088	.020	-.187*
Main Purpose= non-VFR	-.016	.021	-.034
Number of Beds	.035	.012	.133*
Number of Family Members	-.002	.008	-.010

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

#### 5.4.6 NUMBER OF VFRs STAY IN THE COMMERCIAL ACCOMMODATION

The final regression model, as demonstrated below, estimated the number of VFR travel parties that stay in the commercial accommodation.

##### **Model 6:**

No. of VFR Travel Parties Stay at the Commercial Accommodation =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1$  Country of Birth<sub>(born in Australia)</sub> +  $\beta_2$  Immigration Status<sub>(1-10 years)</sub> +  $\beta_3$  Destination<sub>(metropolitan)</sub> +  $\beta_4$  Relationship status<sub>(VF)</sub> +  $\beta_5$  MP<sub>(non-VFR)</sub> +  $\beta_6$  Number of Beds +  $\beta_6$  Number of Family Members +  $\varepsilon$

The partial regression plots and a plot of studentised residuals values of the above regression model demonstrated that there was linearity against predicted values. There was some correlation between residuals as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.75 (within

the acceptable range of 1-3). There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of plot of studentised residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were five cases identified as outliers (standardised residuals greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations). These cases were retained as there was no theoretical basis for removal. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. The regression model statistically significantly predicted the number of VFRs' stay in the commercial accommodation,  $F(7, 532) = 2.32$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , adj.  $R^2 = 0.017$ . Two variables, number of beds ( $\beta = -.099$ ) and number of family Members ( $\beta = .141$ ), made statistically significant condition explaining number of VFRs' stay at the commercial accommodation,  $p < .05$ . Regression coefficients and standard errors of Model-6 are summarised in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 shows that the number of beds of participant VFR hosts ( $\beta = -.099$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ) had a significant negative regression weight, indicating participants with more beds had a lower number of VFRs stay in the commercial accommodation when they visit, after controlling for the other variables in the model (a suppressor effect). Whereas the number of family members measure had a significant positive weight ( $\beta = .141$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), indicating that after accounting for other variables in the model, participants with more family members had higher numbers of VFRs stay in the commercial accommodation. The other five independent variables (i.e. immigration status, born in Australia, destination, relationship status and main Purpose) did not contribute statistically significantly to the multiple regression Model-6.

**Table 5.17: Regression Analysis Summary for Host's Variables Predicting Number of VFRs Stay at the Commercial Accommodation**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SEB</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>COB= Born in Australia</b>	-.009	.031	.019
<b>Immigration Status=10 plus</b>	-.010	.032	-.020
<b>Destination= Metropolitan</b>	-.020	.023	-.038
<b>Relationship Status=VF</b>	.028	.021	.057
<b>Main Purpose= non-VFR</b>	.031	.022	.061
<b>Number of Beds</b>	-.026	.012	-.099*
<b>Number of Family Members</b>	.025	.008	.141*

\*Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$

## 5.5 SUMMARY

The findings of the analysis of quantitative data collected through the online survey indicated differences among VFR host groups regarding characteristics and behaviours of their VFRs and decisions and activities they undertook to host those VFRs based on their COBs, length of migration, destination types and relationship with VFRs. The following sections summarised the differences in hosting VFRs based on hosts characteristics, identified through the quantitative research of this study.

### 5.5.1 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT VFR HOSTS

Table 5.18 below provides a summary of the findings of differences in hosting VFRs between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents, identified through this study. As indicated in Table 5.18 that immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts had hosted VFRs, varied in their trip characteristics. Moreover, immigrant and non-immigrant hosts also differed regarding their hosting decisions and activities with their VFRs.

**Table 5.18: Summary of Significant Differences between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts**

Immigrant Hosting VFRs	Non-immigrant Hosting VFRs
<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher numbers of first-timer &amp; overseas visitors</li> <li>• Higher numbers of VFRs who primarily visited the hosts for recreational purpose</li> <li>• Involved more in touristic activities (such as visiting natural attractions, recreational activities, and packaged tours)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs :</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher numbers of repeat visitors</li> <li>• Higher numbers of VFRs whose primary purpose was to visit the hosts.</li> <li>• Involved more in less touristic activities (such as fishing, swimming, biking, BBQ, picnic, visiting nearby parks and gardens, local events, shopping and dining out)</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended diverse touristic activities to their VFRs</li> <li>• Spent relatively more money for hosting purpose</li> <li>• Participated more with VFRs in their activities and visiting of attractions</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended more less touristic activities</li> <li>• Spent relatively less money for hosting purpose</li> <li>• Participated relatively less with VFRs in their activities and visiting of attractions</li> </ul>

The following table (Table 5.19) shows the summary of the differences identified within immigrant VFR hosts based on their length of residency in Australia. As indicated in Table 5.19, immigrant hosts within the first five to ten years of migration experienced hosting VFRs differently than from immigrant hosts who migrated up to ten years previously.

**Table 5.19: Summary of Significant Differences between Immigrant Hosts Based on their Length of Residency**

<b>Immigrant Hosts: 1-10 years</b>	<b>Immigrant Hosts: 10 plus years</b>
<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visited by more first-time visitors from overseas</li> <li>• Attracted more VFRs who had recreational purpose of visit</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visited by more repeat visitors from overseas</li> <li>• Attracted more of the VFRs who had VFR as their main purpose of visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend relatively more money for hosting purposes</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend relatively less money for hosting purposes</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Assimilation</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows more differences in hosting VFRs from the non-immigrants/locals</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Assimilation</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows less differences in hosting VFRs from the non-immigrants/locals</li> </ul>

### **5.5.2 HOSTING FRIENDS VERSUS HOSTING RELATIVES**

The Table 5.20 below provides a summary of the differences between hosting friends and hosting relatives, identified through the quantitative research of this study. As demonstrated in Table 5.20 below, trip characteristics of visiting relatives hosted by the VFR hosts differed from the trip characteristics of visiting friends in terms of primary purpose of visits, frequency of visits, duration of stay and accommodation stayed. Moreover, hosting decision and activities also varied between hosting friends and hosting relatives.

**Table 5.20: Summary of Significant Differences between Hosting Friends and Relatives**

Interaction with Visiting Relatives (VRs)	Interaction with Visiting Friends (VFs)
<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VFR travel purpose was higher among VRs</li> <li>• Attracted more repeat visitors</li> <li>• Duration of trips of their VRs was relatively short</li> <li>• VRs stayed more with the hosts</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational purpose of visits was higher among VFs</li> <li>• Attracted more first-time visitors</li> <li>• Duration of trips of their VFs was relatively longer</li> <li>• VFs relatively stayed more in commercial accommodations</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompanied more in travel activities and visiting of attractions</li> <li>• More diverse in spending</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accompanied relatively less in travel activities and visiting of attractions</li> <li>• Less diverse in spending</li> </ul>

### 5.5.3 HOSTING VFRs: METROPOLITAN VERSUS REGIONAL DESTINATION

The following table (Table 5.21) presents the differences in hosting VFRs between hosts in the metropolitan and regional areas. As indicated below in Table 5.21, VFRs visited the hosts in the metropolitan and regional destinations varied regarding their primary purpose of visits, duration of stay, group size and travel activities. Hosting decisions and activities of VFR hosts also varied between metropolitan and regional destinations.



**Table 5.21: Summary of Significant Differences between Hosting in Metropolitan and Regional Destinations**

<b>Metropolitan Destination</b>	<b>Regional Destination</b>
<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration of stay: Five nights</li> <li>• Higher number of non-VFR purpose of visit</li> <li>• Relatively smaller group size</li> <li>• Involved more in visiting local built attractions</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Trip Characteristics of VFRs:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duration of stay: Six nights</li> <li>• VFR Purpose of Visit: higher</li> <li>• Relatively larger group size</li> <li>• Involved more visiting nearby parks and gardens, forests, rivers/lakes, lookouts</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended more built attractions to their VFRs</li> <li>• Spent relatively more money for hosting purpose</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Hosting Decisions &amp; Activities:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended more natural attractions to their VFRs</li> <li>• Spend relatively less money for hosting purpose</li> </ul>

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter reported the final results of the quantitative research that addressed research Objectives Three to Research Objective Six of this study. The summary of the key differences of hosting VFRs among VFR host groups identified through this study was also provided. The next chapter presents the findings of the qualitative research of this study.

## **CHAPTER 6: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**


This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative research of this study. The objective was to examine the host's perspective on their encounters with VFRs and to see whether the experience of hosting differs between hosting friends and hosting relatives, between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts and hosting in metropolitan and regional settings. As outlined previously (Chapter 3), local resident VFR hosts in all three contrasting destinations (Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat) in Victoria were interviewed over the telephone. To capture the different aspects of hosting experience the interviewees were asked about the characteristics of VFR travel parties that visited them and how they interacted with them. This chapter initially reports the results relating to the characteristics of VFR travel parties, who visited the local resident hosts in their immediate past twelve months (Section 6.2). Finally, the findings of the thematic analysis of the responses regarding the nature of interactions with VFR travel parties is provided (Section 6.3).

### **6.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAVEL PARTIES**

The majority (75%) of the participants interviewed stated that they had hosted both friends and relatives in the immediate twelve month period. The frequency of hosting ranged from once a week to once a year. The categories of people hosted by local residents ranged widely. The relatives included immediate family (such as parents, siblings, son and daughter) and extended family members (grandparents, cousins and in-laws). The friends who visited the hosts were typically long-term friends or childhood friends. The range of travel parties included both domestic and international visitors.

The responses relating to the purpose of visit and type of accommodation used revealed that most participants (n= 19) were PVFR hosts (56%) followed by EVFR hosts (n = 12; 35%) with only three participants (9%) being CVFR hosts (Figure 5.1).

**Figure 6.1: Distribution of Data Based on Visiting Friends and Relatives Travel Host Definitional Model**

	Accommodation: Host's home	Accommodation: Commercial
Purpose of Visit for visitor: VFR	<b>PVFR Host</b>  <b>n= 19 (56%)</b>	<b>CVFR Host</b>  <b>N= 12 (9%)</b>
Purpose of Visit for visitor: Non-VFR	<b>EVFR Host</b>  <b>n= 3 (35%)</b>	 non-VFR host

### **6.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS: EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN VFR HOSTS AND VFRS**

Participants' comments regarding interactions with their various travel parties were analysed based on the three core research categories: VFs versus VRs, immigrants versus non-immigrants and destination influence. The results are presented in three sections. Section 6.3.1 presents the differences in hosting between friends and relatives. Section 6.3.2 reports the differences of hosting VFRs between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. The final section (Section 6.3.3) states the differences of hosting VFRs between the hosts living in metropolitan and regional areas. Each section has two broad thematic categories representing a specific category of hosts. At the end of each section, a summary table has been provided presenting the key factors identified in each thematic category with a discussion. As outlined previously in section 3.6.3 (Chapter 3), codes are assigned for each

participant (such as B1 for the first person interviewed in Ballarat, G2 for the second person in Geelong and M3 for the third person interviewed in Melbourne) to protect their identity. So the same codes are used alongside gender and migration status information (where necessary), and against each respondent's comments provided in the following three sections. Table 6.1 below provided a synopsis of the interactions between the participant VFR hosts and their most recent VFR travel parties, indicating about the differences in experiences of hosting VFRs who varied in their trip characteristics and purposes.

**Table 6.1: A Synopsis of Interaction between VFR Hosts and Guests of this Study**

<b>Participants (COB)</b>	<b>Trip Characteristics (most recent travel party)</b>	<b>Purpose of Visit</b>	<b>Key Aspects of Hosting Experience</b>
<b>B1 (Australia)</b>	Sister with her two children; Middle of July; From Adelaide; First time visit; Stayed with the hosts; Stayed four nights	Visit the hosts	Very close to each other
<b>B2 (Poland)</b>	Great cousins; Couple; One person of the group is immigrant other is non-immigrant; Hobart; First time; Stayed in the commercial accommodation; Second week of August; One week	Invited in the host's place for dinner and to spend family time; They had their own plan too.	Usually do the same thing with their visitors. The overseas visitors need more assistance.
<b>B3 (Australia)</b>	Old Friends; Couple; Melbourne; Stayed with the hosts; Repeat visit; First week of the May; One night	Came to see festival in a nearby town	The nature of relationship is different than the relatives; different expectations
<b>B4 (Australia)</b>	Old Friends ; Couple with two children; Melbourne; Stayed with the hosts; One night; Repeat; Middle of September	School holidays fun activities in the local area.	Nature of relationship is different from relatives; share similar interest more with friends
<b>B5 (Australia)</b>	Long-time friend; Melbourne; Stayed with the hosts; One night; First time; July	See the hosts and also the place	Relate differently to friends than relatives; Families are natural relationship
<b>B6 (Bangladesh)</b>	In-laws; From overseas; Stayed with the hosts; 21 days; First time; Middle of the year	Mainly came to see the host and also to see the place.	There is a differences in relationship between friends and relatives; More formal with friends
<b>B7 (Australia)</b>	Brother; Sydney; Stayed with the hosts; Four nights; Repeat visit; First week of September	Niece's Birthday	It is more relaxing with the family.
<b>B8 (UK)</b>	College friends; Couple; Overseas; Stayed in the commercial accommodation; For a month; September; First time	They were actually on their own holiday in Australia	Different purposes
<b>B9 (Poland)</b>	Mother & step-father; Stayed a month; Stayed with the hosts and also in the commercial accommodation when visited away from the home; First time; From Germany	Mainly spend a quality time with the hosts; Additionally to visit Australia	Different level of expectations

<b>B10 (UK)</b>	Husband's work colleagues; Couple; Melbourne; Stayed with their own relatives in Ballarat; November; Repeat visit	Catch-up before Christmas	Different purposes and expectations
<b>G1 (Australia)</b>	Sister from WA; One night; Stayed with the host; August; Repeat visit	Family visit; Catch-up	Family are closer than friends; Having friends are just as important as relatives; Do the same thing; know each other's very well; Same interests
<b>G2 (Australia)</b>	Wife's friend from Melbourne; Repeat Visit; Two days; Stayed with the hosts; Repeat visit; August	Catch-up during the weekend	Having visit from the grandchildren is more enjoyable. With friends it is just a social thing.
<b>G3 (Australia)</b>	Family friends from Melbourne; Two nights; Stayed with the hosts; First visit; August	Main purpose was to visit the hosts but also to visit the place	Both family and friends are important; Associate with both friends and relatives with the same intensity
<b>G4 (Australia)</b>	Wife's side relatives; From Sydney; January; Repeat visit; Stayed with the host	See each other; catching up; Spending time together	Relatives expect more assistance and attention
<b>G5 (Australia)</b>	Long-time friends from school; Couple from NSW; Stayed with the hosts; Three nights; Repeat visit; First week of August	They mainly came to see a football match in the same city.	Different purposes
<b>G6 (Australia)</b>	Parents from SA; May; Stayed for five days; Commercial accommodation close to the hosts; Repeat visit	Family visit; quite time	Different interests
<b>G7 (Australia)</b>	Exchange student from Japan; Stayed for a week; With the hosts; First time in Australia; September	Came to see Australia; Learn about the culture and places	Different purposes and nature
<b>G8 (Australia)</b>	Son & grandson from USA; September; Stayed with the hosts; Two weeks; Repeat visit	Regular family visit	Different age groups and atmosphere
<b>G9 (Australia)</b>	Cousins from Sydney; Couple with one kids; March Stayed with the hosts; Five days; Repeat visit	Came to visit the place; Had a break; Relaxing in a quiet and calm environment	Different expectation and nature; Relatives are more relaxed
<b>G10 (Australia)</b>	Friends; Met them during a cruise in overseas Retired couple from UK; Stayed in commercial accommodation; For a moth First time in Australia; Third week of July	The visitors were on the holiday on their own holiday in Australia	Need to do different things, Need to do more activities with the friends

<b>G11 (Scotland)</b>	Two aunts and their sisters from Scotland; October; Three weeks at the hosts place and two weeks in Melbourne while visiting there; First time in Australia	Mainly came to see us in Australia	Attach more with the relatives
<b>G12 (Australia)</b>	Son (from Brisbane) and daughter (Sydney) and their families; December; Stayed for two nights; with the hosts; Repeat visit	Say hello and seeing each other; The son also came to watch a football match at the same time	Relatives are more closer than friends
<b>G13 (Australia)</b>	College friend from WA; First week of August; Stayed for three days; With the host; Repeat visit	Seeing the hosts; Catch-up	Relatives have high expectations
<b>G14 (USA)</b>	Partner's siblings from QLD; Stayed for three weeks; Stayed with the hosts ;Repeat visit	Family visit; Came to see the newly built house of the hosts	Level of activities is different, Relatives tend to spend more time together
<b>M1 (Australia)</b>	Three friends from Perth; First time in Melbourne in July; Six days ;with the hosts	Visiting the hosts as well as to see the place	Differences in expectation; friends like to catch-up but also to look around
<b>M2 (Australia)</b>	Son and his family from Sydney (couple with two kids); Stayed for 10 days; with the hosts; Repeat visit	Regular family visit	Different expectation; relatives are more open with each other
<b>M3 (Australia)</b>	Couple from Adelaide (friends); stayed for a week Stayed in their own son's place in Melbourne; Repeat visit	Mainly came to see their son living in Melbourne	Not really, depends on frequency of visit
<b>M4 (Australia)</b>	Professional Friends from Canada; Couple and another women; Stayed for a month with the hosts; September; First time in Melbourne	Came for a professional reason and also to visit places	Different dynamic; activities with friends are more interesting
<b>M5 (UK)</b>	Friend's couple from France; Went to junior and secondary school together; Third visit in Australia; Stayed with the hosts; For three weeks; August	Mainly came to see the hosts but also sightseeing	Friends share common interests.
<b>M6 (Taiwan)</b>	Couple from Taiwan; Friends from previous work; Visited in September; First time Australia; Stayed one months; Stayed in the commercial accommodation in Melbourne for a week then move to Tasmania for the remaining period	Mainly came for a working holiday	Relatives need more assistance when they come to visit from overseas
<b>M7 (Japan)</b>	Friend from Sydney; Friend from previous work; Stayed two nights with the host; Repeat visit; September	Mainly came to visit her elderly Aunt living in a nursing home in Melbourne and also to visit Melbourne as the	Need to treat friends as a real guests

		visitor hasn't been here for quite a while	
<b>M8 (Australia)</b>	Daughter and her husband from QLD; Over the weekend; August; With the hosts; Repeat visit	Family event	Different purposes; no need to concern too much about the sightseeing and touristic thing when family visit
<b>M9 (Australia)</b>	Three friends from the previous neighbourhood; From Melbourne; One night; Repeat visit; September	Invited to stayover for enjoying the footy grand final match together	With friends its more relaxing and enjoyable
<b>M10 (Australia)</b>	Nephew and his wife and children from Victoria; September; Stayed with the host; For a night; Repeat visit	Regular family visit; The visitors have had their own things to do in Melbourne	Need to balance approach with the friends regarding what to say and do, but not with the relatives



### **6.3.1 VISITING FRIENDS VERSUS VISITING RELATIVES**

The majority of the participant hosts (76%) expressed that they experienced hosting friends and relatives differently. The two key themes that were identified, based on the factors that were mentioned by the participants, were connection of familial relationship and sharing similar tastes and interests.

#### **6.3.1.1 FAMILIAL CONNECTION WITH THE RELATIVES**

This first theme that came through the interviews was in the specific context of hosting relatives where the familial connection was indicated as the most common aspect of interaction with relatives. The participants indicated that they naturally felt closer to their relatives than their friends. For example, a participant explained the relationship with their family members as ‘naturally closely related’ (M5; female), while another participant described it as ‘something that we are part of’ (B5; male). For this reason, participants associated the visit from their family or relatives as ‘about personal connections, memories and relationship’ (B5; male).

Visits from relatives were frequently expressed as being ‘more important’ than visits from friends ‘because blood is thicker than water’ (G11; female). For this reason, the participants consistently indicated their interaction with their relatives as being more personal than with their friends given that the relatives were of the same ‘blood’. This ‘blood’ connection translated to a type of comfort in their VRs presence. For example, a participant said that, ‘I love catching up with them [Relatives] because I miss them’ (B10; female). VRs visits were discussed in a very different way to VF visits and also dominated the visitation levels. The participants unanimously stated that VRs ‘mainly come to see us [the hosts]’ (B7; male).

Often those VR trips were driven by wanting to reconnect socially. Since the trips were often based on simply spending time together and ‘catching up’, the experience of hosting those visitors was different to those who were VFs. As a result, hosting relatives was perceived by many participants as being more relaxing in terms of hosting, as participants claimed that they did not have to worry greatly about engaging in a range of activities outside of their normal pattern in order to try to make their visitors happy or satisfied. For example, a participant stated,

*We didn't need to worry too much about sightseeing and activities as her [relative] visit was more connected with a family visit. We spent time talking and eating at home and went shopping, dined out and went to the nearby beach and parks. (M8; female)*

Moreover, as the relatives were often related closely with each other, the participants stated that they had a better understanding with their relatives and that they also helped each other. For example, a participant highlighted the positive experience of hosting relatives as ‘Relatives are more open and know very well what they like and want to do.’ (M2; female). Similarly, another participant highlighted the flexibility and helping motive of their relatives while hosting: ‘We don't need to worry too much about going out for food. We can cook food at home even sometimes they can cook by themselves. They also help us do things’ (M7; female).

However, difficulties were also expressed by the participants in terms of hosting relatives. Sometimes this was because of conflict in what to do, because ‘while the relatives are closely related with each other (they) do not necessarily always share the same interest’ (M5; female). This was particularly the case when relatives belonged to different age groups, where there may be differences in ideas and tastes, which are sometimes culturally significant.

Some differences simply reflected different desires in how to relax. For example, while one participant indicated that their parents like to ‘spend more time together (with the host) at the house’ (G6; male), another participant mentioned that their relatives, who visited with their children, like to focus on ‘outdoor activities with the kids’ (B10; female). Despite the differences, the hosts interviewed reported that they often felt obliged to serve purposes of their relatives. As one participant stated in this regard, ‘I do not stop them [relatives] doing their things that they like to do when they visit’ (B5; male).

However, such differences can increase the chance of friction and misunderstanding with relatives. One participant reported friction with their parents, ‘It doesn’t matter how mature you are they always tend to intervene and influence your personal stuff’ (B9; female). The participants also pointed out that they can easily overcome that friction and misunderstanding with their relatives because of the strength of their close relationship. For example, a participant said that, ‘This kind of issue (friction and misunderstanding) will never become so big that we will stop seeing each other’ (B8; male). While friction was reported by a number of the participants, hosting relatives was also seen as being relaxing as things were often ‘very calm and quiet’ (G6; male). This was particularly the case when the interaction was ‘more on the family related matter’ (M4; male).

#### **6.3.1.2 SHARING SIMILAR TASTES AND INTERESTS WITH THE FRIENDS**

Many of the participants mentioned the importance and joy of hosting friends, which some regarded as, ‘just as important as relatives’. It was highlighted that being visited by friends was a positive experience as they share ‘common interests and taste’. The participants revealed that friends are likely to have lots of things in common because they are usually in the same age group and therefore want to do things that suit them all. For example, a participant with young children described her network of friends as ‘We all [me and my friends] are at the same point of life having young kids, so they [friends] always bring their

children with them. So ‘a great family fun for everyone’ (B4; female). On the other hand, a participant from an older demographic described his friends as, ‘We are all at the same age and living on our own with no more young children to raise, so the atmosphere is pretty much similar for all of us’ (G8; male). So in the absence of any familial expectation of seeing each other, the interaction with the friends was connected more with ‘having fun, sharing interests and doing things together’ (B3; male).

The participants consistently highlighted the recreational aspect with hosting friends, which would typically involve sightseeing and outdoor activities. One participant indicated the differences of the purpose of visit between their friends and relatives stating that, ‘Friends mainly came to see us as part of their holiday. But family mainly came to see us and also do a bit of travel’ (B8; male). Thus, the hosting was seen to require a different balance of things to see and do between friends and relatives, as stated by one participant:

*with family I spend a bit more time indoors, but with the friends, I tend to do more outdoor stuff like movies; having coffee in the café, going to beach; walking along the garden; go to the exhibition and more if time permits (G1; female).*

Despite having similar tastes and interests, the participants also highlighted that they do not have the same sort of closeness in a relationship with the friends as they have with their family or relatives. One participant described the differences in relationship as, ‘We love to have both our friends and relatives.... it is more formal with friends whereas with our relatives we have an informal relationship, so the experience is different’ (B6; male). Because of differences in the relationship, participants indicated that they have to treat their friends as a ‘real guest’ (M7; female) by taking care of them properly, which may involve considerable effort from the hosts to ensure their guest’s happiness. For example, a participant stated the formalities of hosting friends as, ‘We have to make sure everything is

okay and enjoyable to keep their interest alive ... planning different things and visit places to create a positive impression' (B7; male).

The relationship with friends was often reported as being less open than that with relatives. As a result, the participants often stated that they felt they needed to alter their normal demeanour to impress their friends or to avoid any friction and misunderstanding. One of the participants expressed that they tend to be more compassionate towards their friends while hosting:

*you would not want to upset your friends because they would not probably visit you again. But with the relatives, they still have to come and visit you. So you need to be more careful with your friends and can be more honest with your family.*  
(B10; female).

The effort involved in continually planning impressive meals and a range of things to satisfy their visiting friends was reported as being particularly challenging and exhausting when the visit was for a long duration. In particular, it was revealed that friends who tend to stay with the hosts for a long duration consider themselves to be on holiday and therefore do not feel any obligation to help the hosts with their hosting jobs. For example, a participant described the difficulties of hosting friends as opposed to relatives as, 'They (friends) usually do not help me out that much. They (friends) just want to stay ... but they (relatives) always help me, because it is a family thing so is something a bit different' (G5; female).

Despite all the formalities and obligations, the participants indicated that having similar interests and tastes and the objective of having fun together can make the hosting of friends more exciting and enjoyable than the familial interactions with the relatives. This was described by one participant as, 'The activities with the friends are more interesting because we have lots of things to share and do lots of different things' (M4; male).

### 6.3.1.3 HOSTING FRIENDS VERSUS RELATIVES: SUMMARY

Ten key differences associated with the purposes, conveniences, challenges and involvement in activities of hosting between friends and relatives were identified from the discussion of above two broad thematic categories. These are presented in Table 6.2, which indicate that hosts perceived the relationship with friends and relatives differently and hence experience the hosting differently between friends and relatives. Overall, the familial relationship with the relatives seems to provide more advantages or convenience. The relationship with friends was indicated as being more formal, and hence, hosts need to put some control over their normal demeanour while hosting friends.

**Table 6.2: Summary of Key Differences in Hosting Friends and Relatives**

Interactions with visiting relatives	Interactions with visiting friends
<b><u>Purpose of visit:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trip purpose driven by reconnecting with the hosts</li></ul>	<b><u>Purpose of visit:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Come to see hosts as a part of holiday</li></ul>
<b><u>Conveniences:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informal relationship</li><li>• Do not have to do a lot to impress them</li><li>• More open and understanding</li><li>• Help each other</li><li>• Relax</li><li>• Quiet and calm</li></ul>	<b><u>Conveniences:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Similar likings and interests</li><li>• Fun and exciting</li><li>• More compassionate</li></ul>
<b><u>Challenges:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Different likings and interests</li></ul>	<b><u>Challenges:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Formal relationship</li><li>• Friends want to be waited on</li><li>• Obligation to make them happy</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More careful about what to say and do</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Involvement:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on spending time together at home</li> <li>• Talking and interacting: family-related matters</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Involvement:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do different things to impress them</li> <li>• Focus on doing things outside the home</li> </ul>

### **6.3.2 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT HOSTS**

Two dominant themes emerged from the analysis of the comments provided by the immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. The first theme, which stemmed from the immigrant hosts, was connection with their homeland from where they have migrated. The second theme, which came from the non-immigrant hosts, was reunion with friends and family members living apart.

#### **6.3.2.1 CONNECTION WITH THE HOMELAND**

All of the immigrant host participants interviewed reported that they have had either (or both) friends or relatives visit them from their homeland. In particular, immigrant hosts stressed the importance of keeping the relationship ‘intact’ with their friends and relatives whom they left in their homeland. One of the participants stated that being visited by their friends and relatives from their homeland was ‘very important’ as it helped to ‘maintain existing networks’ (B2; female; immigrant) in terms of the relationship with their country of origin. Similarly, another participant stated, ‘When you live alone, abroad, away from your friends and family back home, you always miss them and look forward to them visiting you’ (M7; female; immigrant). Another participant highlighted the opportunity to reassociate themselves with their native culture when someone visits from their homeland:

‘It was great to get the chance of talking in my own language, having traditional food and spending time with the like-minded people from abroad’ (B6; male; immigrant).

The interaction with visiting relatives from the hosts’ homeland was rated as ‘more important’ than rekindling with their visiting friends by the majority (75%) of immigrant participants. For example, one participant expressed that, ‘I would not be able to stay here if my family/relatives did not visit me. Their visit helps me to stay far away from them and keeps me going’ (B9; female; immigrant). Immigrant participants highlighted that being visited by their family members from overseas not only gave them the opportunity to spend time with them but also provided an opportunity to show them their new lifestyle and new country they adopted, hoping to make them proud. For example, one participant stated that, ‘It provides the opportunity to meet and spend time but also to promote my lifestyle and culture’ (B2; female; immigrant). Similarly, another participant highlighted the importance of displaying their new lifestyle to their relatives living overseas:

*I like to show that we do live civilised, not in the tin shack. Because that’s what they thought I was living here in Australia. So it is nice, and I like them to come here and visit and see so that they can come out of that preconceived idea about how we live and what the culture is here. (B10; female; immigrant).*

Immigrant participants, therefore, indicated that they wanted to offer wide-ranging activities to their visiting relatives from their original homeland so that they could showcase the lifestyle and culture of their new country. As noted by one participant, ‘The relatives have high expectations, and they are always interested to see why I am living here. So I had to show them that life here is as good as possible’ (B9; female; immigrant). Immigrant participants additionally pointed out that their relatives primarily visited to reconnect. It was noted that, ‘they [family] mainly came to spend a quality time with me. Additionally, they were interested in visiting Australia, but that did not play any major role in their decision of visiting me’ (B10; female; immigrant).



In contrast to visiting relatives, immigrant hosts reported that they do also engage in a wide range of activities with their friends but that was connected more with the touristic purposes of the visit from their friends. In fact, one participant described his friends who visited them from their original homeland as ‘tourists’ (B6; male; immigrant), because they were also spending their time in Australia touring other destinations. Similarly, another participant referred to a recent visit by friends as, ‘it was mainly a holiday for them’ (B8; female; immigrant).

For this reason, immigrant hosts stressed that they tended to act more as a ‘guide’ when their friends visited from overseas through facilitating and recommending activities and even giving them company so that they could have the holiday they expected and could enjoy their visit properly. For example, ‘I will do everything as I can do for them [friends] but the importance is not the same as with my relatives’ (M6; female; immigrant). In particular, immigrant participants highlighted the importance of providing more assistance than usual to their overseas visitors who were visiting for the first time, noting that they have a completely different culture and environment. One participant felt that

*As they [friends and relatives] were from Poland, they needed a bit more assistance from us like interpreting and guiding as they could not understand the local language and were here for the first time. So my job was to be a local guide and interpreter. (B2; female; immigrant).*

The immigrant participants also indicated the long duration of stay by their VFRs who had come from overseas, which impacted on their personal space and the normal course of life, especially when those visitors had stayed with them in their home. It was recognized that ‘it is not always easy sharing space with other people whom we do not meet that frequently (i.e. friends and relatives from overseas), but we have to manage it anyway’ (B8; male; immigrant). Similarly, another participant emphasized that hosting for a long time impacted upon their daily life: ‘There are pressures in hosting visitors, because it is on me to organise

things to make sure that we eat and to make sure we go out and stuff” (B10; female; immigrant).

It was recognized that as hosts, they have to make adjustments to their normal life to satisfy their visitors: ‘Sometime I face difficulties, having guests as I do not use any car by choice. So I had to loan or hire a car, especially when someone visits me from overseas to travel around’ (B2; female; immigrants). Despite the difficulties discussed, immigrant hosts showed more willingness to host their families over their friends visiting from their homeland as it was ‘easier’. For example, a participant expressed that, ‘with the family, it does not matter much either they visit for a short time or long term. Because they can do whatever they want without any concern’ (M7; female; immigrant). Similarly, ‘There are lots of pressure (hosting VFRs) but it is more easy going with the family’ (B10; female; immigrant).

#### **6.3.2.2 REUNION WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILIES**

A large number (60%) of non-immigrant hosts also reported that they have had either (or both) friends or relatives visit them from overseas in the past 12 months. The friends who visited the non-immigrant hosts were mainly either their friends whom they met through work or during a trip overseas or friends who had moved overseas from Australia. Relatives who had visited non-immigrant hosts had generally moved overseas from Australia for either a job or lifestyle purposes and had come back to visit ‘home’. For this reason, the majority (60%) of the non-immigrant participants specifically pointed out the importance of face-to-face meeting with their friends and relatives living overseas as it provided them with an opportunity for ‘reunion’ with them.

As one participant stressed, ‘we are now living so scattered from each other that it is really important for all of us to come and see each other whenever possible’ (G9; female; non-

immigrant). Similarly, another participant highlighted the significance of seeing their friends in person, stating, ‘we grew up together but we all are busy with work, family and children now. We always keep in touch with them through social media. But it always nice to catch-up’ (G10; female; non-immigrant).

Although non-immigrant participants who had friends and relatives overseas reported the importance of being visited by both types of visitors, many participants emphasized the visit from their relatives. It was stated simply as ‘What else in life is more important than spending time with family?’ (G4; male; non-immigrant). Similarly, another participant highlighted the opportunity of spending more family time with their closest family members when they visit, ‘as they now live in America, they actually come to visit and stay with us. So now we spent more time together, talking and doing things than before when they used to live here [in Australia]’ (G8; male; non-immigrant).

However, non-immigrant hosts did not need to provide a lot of assistance to their visiting relatives visiting from overseas in the manner reported by immigrant hosts who had hosted overseas visitors. The relatives who visited some of the non-immigrant hosts were actually coming back to visit their homeland, which they already knew very well. For this reason, non-immigrant hosts did not need to be as committed to the visit, as there was no requirement (perceived or otherwise) to organize a large number of activities for their relatives, who were able to do things independently during their stay. Thus, non-immigrant hosts reported the hosting of relatives visiting from overseas as ‘relaxing’ as well as ‘family oriented’. As one participant stated in regard to how much time they had spent with their family members who had recently visited from overseas:

*Not a lot. They [son and his family] did it all [i.e. different activities; visiting places] when they were here with us [in Australia]. So, mostly we spent time together. My son and I went to watch the football. My daughter went shopping sometimes at the local shopping mall with her mother. We also sometimes went*

*out for dinner in a restaurant together. When we went out to travel, we did it locally such as going to the nearby beach and driving around the coastline (G12; male; non-immigrant).*

On the other hand, hosting friends was reported as not as relaxing as hosting relatives for non-immigrant hosts, as their friends had mainly come to visit Australia. For this reason, friends visiting non-immigrant hosts from overseas were interested to visit places and do different things, especially those were visiting Australia for the first time. Non-immigrant participants, therefore, reported that visits from their international friends involved considerable travelling. That travel involved showing them around to give those visiting friends a good idea about Australia and to serve their touristic purpose of visit. For example, a participant explained how he spent time with their friends visited from overseas:

*We have done lots of travelling around Melbourne and also in the country areas. We have been to many places that we had never been to before. We also attended the local festivals and shows in different places. We also went to Halls Gap [national park] and stayed in the bush accommodation as we promised them to show kangaroos. We also visited the theme parks in Melbourne (M4; male; non-immigrant).*

Similar to immigrant, non-immigrant hosts also spoke of the difficulties of losing privacy and adjusting their daily routine when visitors from overseas stayed in their homes for a long period. However, non-immigrant hosts specifically indicated that they needed to be more careful about what they said and did with their visiting friends from overseas because of the cultural differences given those visitors had come from a different country of origin. In contrast, non-immigrant hosts felt it was easier to host their family members who had come from overseas, because those visitors originated from their same country and therefore shared the same values and culture. For example, a participant explained why she was very careful about her behaviour when her friends visited from overseas but did not need to do the same with her visiting relatives from overseas:

*Although she is a good friend of mine and we are very comfortable with each other, I usually do not swear or be too casual with my speaking while she is around. Because this kind of behaviour is treated as bad manners in her culture. But with the family, it doesn't matter. So it is like taking a balancing approach for hosting different people (M10; female; non-immigrant).*

### 6.3.2.3 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT HOSTS: SUMMARY

The differences and similarities between immigrant and non-immigrant hosts regarding their interactions with VFRs from the above two broad thematic categories are presented in Table 6.3, and collectively, those points indicate that hosting VFRs provides a positive experience for both immigrant and non-immigrant hosts. However, having visitors from overseas posed some challenges for the immigrant hosts, in contrast to non-immigrant hosts.

**Table 6.3: Key Differences between Immigrant and Non-immigrant Hosts**

Interactions with visiting relatives	Interactions with visiting friends
<p><b><u>Purpose of visit:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconnecting with their homelands through hosting VFRs</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Purpose of visit:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a reunion with their friends and family living apart</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Conveniences:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share similar values and cultures with both friends and relatives who come to visit from their homelands</li> <li>Easier coping with relatives</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Conveniences:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share similar values and culture with the relatives living overseas</li> <li>No need to worry about providing any assistance to their family members</li> <li>Very relaxed with relatives who visit</li> <li>Do not feel they need to impress their international relatives who visit</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Challenges:</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Challenges:</u></b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to provide more assistance to their international friends and relatives</li> <li>• Tend to feel they need to impress their international visiting friends and relatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The values and cultures differ with the international friends</li> <li>• However, need to provide assistance to their international friends</li> <li>• Less relaxing with their visiting friends</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Involvement:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tend to engage in a wide range of activities with both friends and relatives</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Involvement:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need to engage in many activities with their relatives</li> </ul>

### 6.3.3 DESTINATION INFLUENCE

Based on the interviews with participants from this study, the differences in destinations (i.e. metropolitan and regional) did not make any difference to the experience of hosting friends and relatives. The majority of the participant hosts in both regional (71%) and metropolitan (80%) areas acknowledged the differences in hosting friends versus relatives in a manner similar to that described in the previous two sections. However, the influence of the destination on the hosting role was only identified in terms of providing recommendations and doing things with their visitors. The participants in both regional and metropolitan areas expressed that they gave priority to showcasing their local areas to their visitors irrespective of being visited by friends or relatives. Despite the similarity, two themes emerged regarding the patronizing of local areas by the hosts: loyalty towards the local areas and intent to become visitors in their own area.

#### 6.3.3.1 LOYALTY

The first theme, loyalty towards the local area, was indicated by the majority of the participants (70%) in both regional and metropolitan areas. The local residents showed their

loyalty in various ways. One participant stated that he ‘usually stays within the region’ (G3; male) to do things locally with VFs and VRs. Another participant mentioned a desire to show the uniqueness of the local area to visitors to impress visitors: ‘I always take my visitors to the woollen mill in Creswick, which is an interesting place to visit. Something you cannot find everywhere’ (B1; female). The loyalty to the region included taking VFs and VRs to the local events and festivals, which the participants considered an important aspect of showcasing their local region.

The participant hosts also highlighted that they want to be positive about their local area to try to give a positive impression to their visitors. One participant explained his attitude towards the local area as, ‘To be frank, I always try to be positive about the local area with my friends and relatives as I live here (B6; male). Similarly, another participant showed her loyalty, saying that, ‘I love my city and always have a positive attitude towards it. I like to show different places to my visitors to give them a positive impression of the area’ (M7; female).

#### **6.3.3.2 INTENT TO BECOME VISITORS IN THEIR OWN AREA**

Other participants (32%) expressed a personal benefit when patronizing local areas as a result of hosting. Many participants felt that being visited can be a ‘means’ or ‘excuse’ for the hosts to try new things or visit places that they had not been visited before. One such participant mentioned that,

*Having visitors is a good opportunity for me to visit places that I have not been before. Especially if there are any festivals and events going on that I have not been before; I always try to go there with my visitors (M7; female).*

This aspect was reported more frequently (70%) by the immigrant hosts, as they tended to do a wider range of things with their international visitors to impress them. This was often carried out through presenting their visitors with variety through visiting places they had already visited before with new things. One immigrant host described how he usually

makes the plan of doing things with their VFRs as, ‘If time permits and my visitors want, I always try to do new things alongside with the regular stuff’ (B8; male; Immigrant). For this reason, it was felt that hosting meant that they ‘become a visitor in our [their] own backyard’ (M5; female; Immigrant).

## **6.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reported the results relating to the qualitative research. As such it satisfied the last research objective (Research Objective Seven) of the study. Through the results, this chapter has demonstrated the characteristics of different travel parties that visited the local resident hosts who participated in the study. Thematic analysis of the comments regarding the nature of the social interactions with those travel parties recognised how the experience of hosting varies between hosting friends and hosting relatives and how the immigrant and non-immigrants hosts experience those differences. Finally, thematic analysis informed the influence of destination differences in hosting between metropolitan and regional settings. The next chapter provides the discussion of the findings of both quantitative and qualitative research.



## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative research addressing Research Objectives Three to Seven. Research Objectives One and Two reviewed the existing VFR travel literature, which was carried out in Chapter 2. This chapter discusses the findings of the remaining research objectives (Three to Seven) in context of existing VFR travel research.

This chapter commences by discussing Research Objective Three (Section 7.2), followed by a discussion on the findings of Research Objective Four (Section 7.3), Research Objective Five (Section 7.4), and Research Objectives Six (Section 7.5) and Seven (Section 7.6). The following section discusses the findings in relation to information sources used by VFR hosts (Section 7.7) followed by the discussion of economic (Section 7.8) and social impacts (Section 7.9) of hosting VFRs. The chapter ends with a summary discussion (Section 7.10) and conclusion (Section 7.11) of the chapter.

### **7.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE**

*‘To examine the role of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts to assess whether and to what extent the influence of hosts on VFR travel differ.’*

Research Objective Three examined the differences in hosting VFRs between immigrant and non-immigrant local resident hosts (born in Australia or overseas). In order to address this Research Objective, quantitative research was employed.

According to the literature, the travel pattern of immigrants tends to vary from non-immigrants because of their different cultural orientation based on their respective country of birth (Huong & King, 2002; Lee & King, 2016; Williams et al., 2000). Since the role of

VFR hosts is influenced by the hosts' own travel pattern and tastes (Young et al., 2007), the role of VFR hosts may also vary between immigrant and non-immigrant host groups. However, prior to this study, no previous research examined this aspect. This research, therefore, has provided valuable new insights regarding the differences in hosting VFRs between immigrant and non-immigrant local residents, as addressed in the following five sections.

### **7.2.1 FREQUENCY OF VISIT FROM VFRs**

A large volume of the existing VFR literature has associated VFR travel mostly with immigrant communities. Because, despite the higher effort and cost, immigrants tend to make return visits to their country of birth to visit friends and relatives and also attract them to visit their adopted country (Ashtar et al., 2016; Shani, 2013; Williams & Hall, 2000). Immigrants may, therefore, receive more overseas and first-time visitors than non-immigrants, who are their friends and relatives from their country of births. Such results were evident from this study, as 32% of VFRs hosted by the immigrants were first-time visitors whereas non-immigrants had only 20% first-time visitors. Non-immigrant VFR hosts, in contrast, received more repeat visitors (80%) than the immigrants (68%), who were mainly domestic VFRs.

### **7.2.2 PRIMARY PURPOSE OF VISIT OF VFRs**

Existing literature has highlighted that VFR travel purpose serves as a secondary purpose of trips for many VFR travel parties (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2012b; Moscardo et al., 2000). That is, VFRs are also reporting holidaying, business, or other purposes for their trips. This study has similarly demonstrated that recreational or non-VFR as a primary purpose of visits is prevalent among VFRs (35%) who visited immigrant hosts. Immigrant VFR hosts received higher numbers of VFR travel parties that primarily had a non-VFR primary purpose of visits (such as holiday/pleasure and business) and were involved highly in

various touristic activities (such as visiting natural attractions, recreational activities, and package tours).

Conversely, non-immigrant local resident hosts were found to have hosted a higher number of VFRs (68%) who had primarily travelled to the destination to visit the hosts (i.e. VFR travel purpose). Further, those respondents in this study were found to be highly involved with various less touristic activities, such as fishing, swimming, biking, BBQs. Thus, in contrast to non-immigrant VFR hosts, immigrant VFR hosts have many of their friends and relatives come to visit them from their country of birth who may also be likely to take the trip as an opportunity to visit a new destination.

### **7.2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED TO VFRs**

Previous literature has demonstrated differences in the propensity and nature of recommendations provided by local resident hosts to their VFRs (Backer, 2008; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Young et al., 2007). This research has similarly demonstrated that the nature of recommendations by immigrant local resident hosts varied more than that by non-immigrants. The immigrant hosts recommended a more diverse range of touristic activities, such as visiting natural and built attractions, sightseeing, local food and shopping. In contrast, the non-immigrant hosts focused more on recommending less touristic activities such as fishing, swimming, visiting local festivals/events (such as music events; cultural events; sports game/events; local festivals), shopping, and dining out.

### **7.2.4 EXPENSES OF HOSTING**

According to the literature, hosting VFRs incurs added costs in a range of categories such as groceries, recreational shopping, dining out, beverages, visiting paid attractions and fuel (Backer, 2007, 2008). These are the typical areas of spending attached to hosting duties

(Lashley et al., 2007; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Smith & Brent, 2001). Consistent with the previous findings, this research showed that both immigrant and non-immigrant hosts spent similarly on those common areas (AU\$1-AU\$50 in each category). However, immigrant hosts incurred a higher total cost of hosting VFRs (on average \$700) than by non-immigrants (on average \$500). Thus, this research suggests that immigrant local resident hosts are likely to generate a higher economic impact than non-immigrant hosts through hosting of VFRs.

#### **7.2.5 ACCOMMODATION USED BY VFRs**

In this research, both immigrant and non-immigrant host groups similarly reported that 30% of their travel parties stayed in commercial accommodation. This percentage closely aligned with the previous studies that discussed VFRs' use of commercial accommodation. For example, Backer (2010c) indicated that 26% of VFRs were CVFRs, and Braunlich & Nadkarni (1995) found that 22% of VFRs stayed in commercial accommodation.

Of note, this research revealed that VFR hosts who had larger families and smaller accommodation capacity (based on the number of beds), hosted fewer VFRs in their homes. This finding has provided supporting evidence of Backer's (2010c) assumption that hosts' capacity for hosting in their home could be a significant precursor to visitors selecting commercial accommodation.

#### **7.2.6 TRANSIT ROUTES**

This research has also provided valuable insights regarding the transit routes of VFR travellers by examining the different modes of transport utilised by the VFRs in this study. Very little research has examined the transit routes of VFR trips (Backer, 2010c; Cohen & Harris, 1998; Pennington-Gray, 2003). Those studies demonstrated that VFR trips mainly comprised 'self-drive' and 'flew by aeroplane' transit modes. This research similarly

showed that more than half (54%) of the VFRs who visited their hosts in this study relied on the 'self-drive' option, followed by aeroplane (41%) and train (3%). Since immigrant VFR hosts attracted many of international VFRs resulting in higher numbers (43%) of air travel VFRs. In contrast, VFRs of non-immigrant hosts, who were largely domestic visitors, were predominantly car-based travellers. So immigrant local resident hosts are likely to contribute more to the international commercial air travel market through attracting international visitors to their destination via VFR travel.

### **7.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE FOUR**

*'To examine whether and to what extent length of residency of hosts impacts upon VFR travel, and to compare and contrast whether migration impacts on VFR travel.'*

Research Objective Four was the second research objective addressed through the quantitative research of this study. This Research Objective also examined the differences between immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts but focused on the length of residency of immigrant VFR hosts (i.e. how long they have been living in Australia).

According to the literature, immigrants show different travel patterns when compared to non-immigrants, but this gap reduces over time because of assimilation with the new culture (Slater, 2002; Stodolska, 2000). Assimilation with a new culture is a continuous process that requires years to take effect (Gordon, 2005). Research has indicated that within the first five to ten years of migration, immigrants experience more cultural-specific or socioeconomic constraints than their later periods of life participating in mainstream travel activities or practices in a different social and cultural settings of a new country (Ashtar et al., 2016; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Ying-xue et al., 2013). As a result, immigrants in their early years tend to limit their socialisation and participation within their communities and activities related to their country of origin (Gordon, 2005; Stodolska & Livengood,

2006). However, none of the previous VFR studies examined the influence of length of residency on immigrant local residents' hosting of VFRs.

This research put the timeframe of assimilation- 1-10 years and 10+ years, as applied in previous research, in the test to understand the influence of length of residency on hosting VFRs. The findings of Research Objective Four have demonstrated differences between immigrants who were in their initial ten years compared with those resided in Australia for more than ten years. The following sections discuss those differences.

### **7.3.1 FREQUENCY OF VISIT FROM VFRs**

As discussed previously (Research Objective Three), immigrants are likely to get more first-time visitors than non-immigrants, particularly from overseas. However, the findings from Research Objective Four demonstrated that this was associated more with immigrants who were in their earlier years of migration in the new country. Immigrants who were within their first ten years of migration received higher numbers of first-time visitors (40%) as compared to other long-term immigrants (more than ten years) (32%), and from local born/non-immigrants (20%).

### **7.3.2 PRIMARY PURPOSE OF VISIT OF VFRs**

The findings from Research Objective Three (Section 7.2.2) further demonstrated that immigrant hosts are likely to host more VFRs who have non-VFR travel purposes than non-immigrant hosts. The findings of Research Objective Four, however, again showed that this was more connected with the new immigrants. Immigrants, who were within their 1-10 years of migration had received more VFRs who had a non-VFR travel purpose (44%) than immigrants who were in their ten years and beyond time of migration (42%).

### **7.3.3 EXPENSES OF HOSTING VFRs**

Similar to the finding of Research Objective Three, the findings of Research Objective Four also demonstrated that immigrants incurred a higher total cost of hosting VFRs. However, immigrant VFR hosts, who were within their first ten years of migration, spent almost double the amount averaging AU\$1,182.00 spent by immigrant VFR hosts of 10 plus years (on average AU\$676.00). Since the immigrant hosts in their earlier years of migration received higher numbers of visitors from overseas and VFRs who were visiting for the first time, this may have resulted in the immigrant hosts needing to spend more money for hosting purposes.

### **7.3.4 ASSIMILATION**

Apart from the cost of hosting VFRs, there were no observable differences between immigrant hosts of 10 or more years and non-immigrant hosts in this study. This finding demonstrates the influence of assimilation; that as time passes, immigrants start to acquire the mainstream culture of the new country and also extend social networks with the communities outside of their countries of origins, resulting in greater participation in the mainstream activities such as food, lifestyle, and language (Gordon, 2005; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006).

## **7.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE FIVE**

*‘To assess whether and to what extent destinations (i.e. metropolitan versus regional cities) can impact VFR travel hosting.’*

Research Objective Five examined the difference in hosting VFRs between the local resident hosts residing in metropolitan areas and residing in regional areas. That was the third research objective that utilised quantitative research.

Previous research demonstrated that each destination offers different attributes, distance and cost of travelling, which influence the willingness, perception and subsequent travel activities of travellers (Baxter, 1979; Cheng et al., 2013; Herington et al., 2016; Kim & Perdue, 2016; Nicolau, 2008). However, current VFR travel literature lacks research examining the relationship between destination attractiveness and VFR travel. Only two previous studies have examined the influence of destinations on VFR hosting (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995). Research Objective Five of this research, therefore, has addressed this gap by examining the influence of destination attractiveness on hosting VFRs in contrasting destinations (metropolitan versus regional). The following sections discuss the differences identified through the Research Objective Five.

#### **7.4.1 DURATION OF STAY OF VFRs**

Existing VFR travel literature has indicated a connection between destination attractiveness and duration of stay of VFR travellers demonstrating that VFR travellers tend to stay longer in a relatively more popular tourist destination (Backer, 2008; Gafter & Tchetchik, 2017). This research similarly demonstrated that VFR travel parties that visited the hosts in the regional areas stayed slightly longer (on average six nights) compared to VFR travel parties that visited the hosts in metropolitan areas (on average five nights). However, the longer stay by VFR travellers in regional areas, as compared to metropolitan areas, can vary depending on the popularity of the areas as tourism destinations. Previous research that compared VFR travellers in two regional destinations in Australia (Backer, 2008) demonstrated that VFRs stayed longer in the more popular regional tourist destination.

#### **7.4.2 PURPOSE OF VISIT OF VFRs**

This study has provided a new insight demonstrating a relationship between the destination and the travel purpose of VFRs. VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas received higher



numbers of VFRs who had non-VFR purpose of visits (32%) and subsequently spent more time in less touristic activities, such as fishing, swimming, and bushwalking.

VFR hosts in the regional areas attracted more VFRs who had VFR as their main purpose of visit (69%). Further, those VFRs participated in diverse touristic activities such as visiting attractions, dining out and entertainment for serving their non-VFR purposes. Thus, VFR travel in the regional areas appeared more of a family trip whereas the VFR travel in the metropolitan areas was more a recreational trip for VFRs.

#### **7.4.3 GROUP SIZE OF VFR TRAVEL PARTIES**

This research has provided a further new insight identifying that the average group size of VFR travel parties that visited the regional areas was larger (commonly 3-4 people) compared to that of VFR travel parties in metropolitan areas (commonly 1-2 people). Many of the VFR travel parties visiting regional areas comprised of children (33%), which resulted in larger group sizes. This reinforces the discussion in the previous section (Section 7.4.2) stating that VFR trips to regional areas appeared to be more of a family trip in terms of activities undertaken. This is reinforced by the findings of VFR travel party composition in this study.

#### **7.4.4 NATURE OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

As mentioned previously, existing literature has demonstrated differences in the nature of recommendations provided by local residents to their VFRs (Backer, 2008; Bischoff & Koenig-Lewis, 2007; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Young et al., 2007). This research has similarly demonstrated a difference in the recommendations provided by VFR hosts to their VFRs between regional and metropolitan locations. Regarding local attractions, VFR hosts in the regional area were more inclined to recommend natural

attractions (23% of the recommendations), which resulted in VFR travellers visiting more nearby parks and gardens, forests, rivers/lakes, and lookouts (15% of the attractions visited).

VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas were more inclined to recommend built attractions (35.2%). Consequently, VFR travellers in the metropolitan areas reported visiting large numbers of local built attractions (16% of the attractions visited).

#### **7.4.5 EXPENSES OF HOSTING VFRs**

Additionally, this research has provided new insights regarding the expenses of hosting in regional and metropolitan areas. This research demonstrated that hosting VFRs in the metropolitan areas was more costly than in the regional areas. Although there was no difference observed in individual areas of expenses, VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas incurred higher total costs of hosting VFRs than VFR hosts in the regional areas. Thus, whilst the spending by VFR hosts residing in metropolitan areas was not significantly different from the spending by VFR hosts in regional areas across most of the individual categories, it was significantly higher when all the expenses across the categories were combined.

### **7.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE SIX**

*‘To compare and contrast the hosting of VFs and VRs in different destinations to assess whether and to what extent the characteristics, behaviours and use of local industries differ.’*

Research Objective Six was the final research objective that was addressed through quantitative research. The purpose was to examine in what ways hosting VFs differed to hosting VRs.

Literature has indicated differences in the nature of relationships between friends and relatives, referring to family as an obligatory relationship and friendship as selective or

voluntary one depending on ones' tastes and likings (Gafer & Tchetchik, 2017; Johnson, 2001; Larsen et al., 2007; Schänzel et al., 2014). However, this aspect of VFR travel research is very limited and mainly concerned with how the differences in relationships influence the travel decisions and activities of VFR travellers (Backer et al., 2017; Gafer & Tchetchik, 2017; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). Thus, existing VFR travel literature lacks research examining differences in hosting VFs and hosting VRs. The findings of Research Objective Six has provided some valuable new insights as well as confirmed some current findings regarding the differences in hosting between friends and relatives, as discussed in the following sections (Section 7.5.1 through to 7.5.5).

#### **7.5.1 PURPOSE OF VISIT OF VFRs**

Previous literature has indicated that relatives are more likely to visit each other than friends for maintaining relationships, especially when it requires extra effort and cost (Gafer & Tchetchik, 2017; Johnson, 2001; Larsen et al., 2007). This research has supported this existing notion demonstrating that the primary purpose of visiting hosts was higher among relatives (57%) as opposed to friends (41%). In contrast, a non-VFR purpose of visiting hosts was reported more frequently from friends (59%) than with relatives (42%) indicating friends may likely to take VFR travel as a recreational opportunity.

#### **7.5.2 PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES AND VISITING ATTRACTIONS**

Previous research on VFR hosts demonstrated that VFR hosts not only recommended travel attractions and activities to VFRs but also participated widely with VFRs in their activities and visiting of attractions (Backer, 2007; McKercher, 1995). This participation involves a mixture of routine and non-routine activities and also visiting of attractions, which VFR hosts do not tend to do otherwise (Backer, 2008; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Shani & Uriely, 2012). However, the nature and propensity of VFR hosts joining with

VFRs in their travel activities varied (Griffin, 2017; Dutt & Ninov, 2017; Liu & Ryan, 2011; Young et al. 2007).

Findings of Research Objective Six similarly revealed that VFR hosts were significantly more likely to accompany their relatives (85%) than their friends (72%) when they undertook touristic activities. Of note, the proclivity to participate with VFRs was higher among immigrant hosts, and was especially higher with their visiting relatives (84%).

### **7.5.3 ACCOMMODATION USED BY VFRs**

Previous research has demonstrated that VRs are more likely to stay in the homes of their relatives compared to friends, who are more likely to select commercial accommodation (Backer et al., 2017; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). This research has similarly found that local resident hosts hosted higher numbers of relatives (83%) in their homes than their visiting friends (67%). However, the number of friends (38%) was reported higher than relatives (33%) among those VFRs who stayed in the commercial accommodation. This tendency of hosting relatives more at home was consistent between immigrant and non-immigrant categories as well as between the hosts in regional and metropolitan areas.

### **7.5.4 DURATION OF STAY AND REPEAT VISITATION OF VFRs**

Previous research demonstrated that VR travel parties tend to stay for more nights than VFs, and VRs also make more repeat visits than VFs (Backer et al., 2017; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). This research similarly showed that relatives made more repeat visits (on average six times) to the hosts than friends (on average five times), particularly to visiting non-immigrant VFR hosts. This is understandable as non-immigrants were visited more by domestic visitors, and this may have resulted in their relatives visiting more frequently than the relatives of immigrants from overseas.

In contrast to the previous findings, this research showed that overall friends stayed for more nights (on average six nights) than the relatives (on average five nights), although, relatives in the regional destinations stayed longer (six nights approximately) than the relatives visiting the metropolitan destinations (five nights approximately). Moreover, this finding has provided a further explanation about VFRs longer stay in regional destinations as compared to metropolitan destinations (discussed in Section 7.4.1), finding that longer stay is associated more with VRs.

#### **7.5.5 EXPENSES OF HOSTING VFRs**

Overall there were no significant differences noted regarding the total cost of hosting friends or hosting relatives, but there was a difference in individual levels. This study showed that immigrant VFR hosts spent in more diverse categories (based on more expenses in ‘miscellaneous/others’ categories) besides common categories of spending, such as groceries, shopping, restaurant, liquor, fuel, paid attractions and entertainments, with their visiting relatives than with their visiting friends. Since VFR hosts received higher number of relatives, whose purpose of visit was recreational, they may have needed to spend money in more diverse areas for hosting purposes. Moreover, this may have caused immigrant hosts’ higher total costs of hosting VFRs as compared to non-immigrant hosts, as discussed previously (Section 7.2.4).

#### **7.5.6 SEASONALITY**

Consistent with the previous research (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2012a, 2010c; McKercher, 1995) this study has also demonstrated that the flow of VFRs is sustained throughout the year, with understandable increases in flows associated with holidays such as the school holidays, and festivities such as Easter and Christmas. Interestingly, this research has further demonstrated that relatives visited more in the second half of the year as compared

to friends who visited more during the first half of the year. This might have resulted as the families tend to reconnect over the Christmas which is more of a family event.

## **7.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE SEVEN**

*‘To examine the nature of the social interactions between hosts and their VFRs.’*

Research Objective Seven was addressed through the qualitative research conducted in this study. As discussed previously a thematic analysis of the participants’ comments regarding interactions with their VFRs was conducted. The findings of the analysis were categorised under three main themes: VFs versus VRs; immigrants versus non-immigrants and destination influence. Each of the categories included two sub-themes representing a specific category of hosts.

The findings of the qualitative research of this study provided several insights regarding the VFR hosting experience and subsequent activities from the interactions between VFR hosts and visitors, which have been under-researched. Previous research has indicated the differences in the hosting experiences (positive versus negative) (e.g. Schänzel et al., 2014; Shani & Uriely, 2012) and activities (high involvement versus low involvement) (e.g. McKercher, 1995; Young et al., 2007). However, previous research has not identified whether the experiences and activities of hosts differ for VFs and VRs, their immigration status or destination attributes. Research Objective Four has addressed this gap identifying differences in the experiences and activities of hosting VFRs based on the relationships with VFRs, immigration status and destination types, as discussed in the following sections:

### **7.6.1 HOSTING FRIENDS VERSUS HOSTING RELATIVES**

This research revealed that VFR hosts experience hosting friends and hosting relatives differently (expressed by 76% of the participants). Respondent hosts from this study were generally found to feel that hosting relatives was more important than hosting friends

because it was driven by the familial bonds and the core objective of reconnecting and spending time with family. For this reason, hosts were inclined to do more ‘in-home’ hosting; facilitating more familial time with their visiting family members. In contrast, hosting friends centred around the social relationship that had been built on having similar interests and likes, being of a similar age group, and the objective of doing things together for fun. As a result, hosts guided their friends in a wide range of ‘outdoor activities’ to serve the recreational purpose of the interaction with friends.

Moreover, this finding identified the importance of examining VFs and VRs differently, and consistent with previous research (e.g. Backer, 2010c; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; McKercher, 1995), this study has shown that VFR travel should not be treated as one homogenous segment. This research has been significant in examining the hosting of VFs versus VRs and has found that people approach the role of hosting friends and hosting relatives differently. The types of activities undertaken vary depending on whether the host has friends or relatives staying, and benefits to the host also vary from experiences of ‘fun’, ‘relaxing’ or ‘exhausting’. Hosting relatives was found overall to be especially important in terms of reconnecting socially and bonding. Hosting relatives was typically found to be more important to the hosts than hosting friends, suggesting that indeed ‘blood is thicker than water’ (G11; female).

#### **7.6.2 IMMIGRANT VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANT VFR HOSTS**

This research highlighted that immigrant hosts’ experienced hosting differently from non-immigrant hosts. Immigrant VFR hosts in this study generally revealed that they placed extreme importance on being visited by relatives from their country of origin (75% of the immigrant participants). Having relatives from their country of origin visit providing hosts with the opportunity of maintaining their connection with their ‘roots’ and also allowed

them to showcase their new lifestyle to their relatives to ‘prove’ their purpose of migration. Immigrant hosts also revealed a desire to impress their relatives visiting from overseas. Immigrants were also found to attract friends from their previous country of origin and as a result of those visits found that they ‘serve as a local tourist guide’ to support their touristic interests of their international friends who visited.

Non-immigrants, on the other hand, indicated hosting VFRs as a chance to have a ‘reunion’ with the friends and relatives who they usually don’t get the chance to meet frequently. Similar to immigrants, non-immigrants also placed more importance on being visited by their relatives. However, it was identified that immigrant hosts from this study tended to engage in a wide range of touristic activities, while non-immigrant hosts were less inclined to participate in such a wide range of such activities.

### **7.6.3 INFLUENCE OF DESTINATION**

This research additionally examined the role of the destination in hosting of friends and relatives. Previous research by Backer (2008) identified that destination has an important role in influencing VFR travel, finding that VFRs stay longer in those destinations that are considered more attractive in tourism terms. Backer (2008) concluded that the attractiveness of the destination, not just the attractiveness of the host, ‘drove’ VFR travel. This study examined the influence of the destination in terms of impacting the hosting experience. Local resident hosts in this study expressed loyalty towards their local region by participating in, and recommending, activities to their VFRs in their capacity as hosts. This study also found that VFR hosting provide an opportunity for local residents to participate in the activities or visit places that they have not previously experienced before. This was particularly prevalent for the immigrant hosts as they tended to undertake more



varied activities with their VFRs from overseas in order to impress them by becoming a tourist in one's own backyard.

#### **7.6.4 NATURE OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS**

According to the literature, social interactions or our everyday encounters/behaviours with others vary as they are guided by different purposes or motivations, role-playing, difficulties or challenges and level of involvement (Argyle et al., 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). Similarly, the findings of Research Objective Seven have indicated differences in purposes, roles, challenges and level of involvement in the social interactions of different groups of VFR hosts with their respective VFRs through hosting. The following sections summarise the differences regarding the nature of social interactions of VFR hosts with their VFRs.

##### **7.6.4.1 MOTIVATIONS/PURPOSES IN THE INTERACTIONS:**

Literature indicates that people engage in social interactions for various purposes: maintaining or building positive relationships, forming social networks or presentation of one's self or personal identity (Argyle et al., 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). Maintaining existing network of relationships with friends and family was a common purpose for engaging in hosting VFRs by the participant VFR hosts of this study. However, maintaining positive relationships through hosting VFRs appeared more of a ritual with relatives and non-ritual with friends, because of the different nature of the relationship. Moreover, this research revealed that for the immigrant hosts, VFRs means reconnecting with their friends and families living abroad, as opposed to the non-immigrant hosts when it was more to 'catch-up' with their friends and family living apart.

Further, immigrant VFR hosts were also motivated to present their personal identity through hosting VFRs who come to visit from their country of birth. Migrant hosts tended

to ‘show off’ and promote their current lifestyle to their friends and families to make a positive impression about their decision to migrate. Thus, immigrant hosts were highly involved in sightseeing and touristic activities with the friends and family.

#### **7.6.4.2 ROLE IN THE INTERACTIONS**

The hosting role played by VFR hosts while hosting relatives was fundamentally different from the role of hosting friends. Based on the literature (Gahagan, 1984), the hosting of relatives was a ‘universal role’ as it was emerged or driven from the kinship systems (such as parents and siblings). For this reason, VFR hosts felt more obligated to accommodate, feed and take good care of their relatives to make them happy when they came to visit them, since the ‘universal role’ is connected with traditional social expectations, values and norms (Gahagan, 1984). Despite various social obligations attached to hosting relatives, VFR hosts in this study indicated that it was more convenient to host relatives compared to friends. Hosting relatives was reported as being more informal and relaxed, and hosts reported they did not have to do a lot to impress their relatives.

The role of hosting friends, on the other hand, was more influenced by personal likings and interests than obligation. As a result, VFR hosts of this study reported that the social interactions with their VFs were more fun and exciting, but that it required them to have more control over their usual demeanour to make their visiting friends remain comfortable and happy.

#### **7.6.4.3 CHALLENGES OR DIFFICULTIES IN THE INTERACTIONS**

Participating in social interactions comes with some inherent challenges or difficulties (Argyle et al., 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). Immigrant participants in this study also revealed some of the difficulties in maintaining relationships with their VFRs who live

in overseas. By contrast, it was easier for the non-immigrant hosts maintain a relationship through VFR travel with their friends and relatives.

VFR hosts also faced difficulties due to spatial factors as the hosting role involved sharing personal space with their VFRs, which in some cases affected their sense of privacy. This can become particularly problematic when the VFRs stay for a long period (Shani & Uriely, 2012). Moreover, hosting involved considerable physical and mental effort in planning and executing activities in order to take care of and satisfy VFRs and therefore can be challenging and exhausting. VFR hosts in this study similarly dealt with the high expectation of the relatives due to the universal nature of the relationship, which created socio-psychological difficulties for the hosts. However, the hosts were well aware of the expectation of their visitors which helped them avoid frictions and misunderstanding with their VFRs and by controlling their hosting behaviours and activities.

#### **7.6.4.4 LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT**

People maintain their involvement in social interactions by controlling both psychological and physical boundaries with others (Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001). As discussed previously (Chapter 2), physical boundaries refer to controlling spatial boundaries by moving away or closer to others, and psychological boundaries refer to limiting or controlling of information, appearance or usual demeanour.

The local resident VFR hosts of this study did show differences in the level of involvement in both psychological and physical terms. Regarding physical boundaries, VFR hosts in this study indicated that they usually gave more priority to their VRs over VFs when it comes to accommodating visitors in their home. The local resident VFR hosts also showed psychological boundaries by acknowledging that they felt more closeness to their relatives, compared to friends.

Overall, through the findings of the Research Objective Seven this study revealed that the nature of hosting VFRs largely influenced by the type of visitors. The experience of hosting VF and VR was not same as they had different sets of expectations from the hosts. Although the hosting of relatives was more relaxing it was attached to universal obligations of providing shelter, food and good care to the visiting relatives. On the other hand, the relationship with the friends was more formal but it was more flexible as it did not attach to any sort of universal obligation. Although the objective of involving in hosting VFRs was to maintain the existing network of relationships it did not influence everyone in the same way. The experience of migrant communities is not as the same as the non-immigrant communities.

## **7.7 INFORMATION SOURCES**

This research has provided important details on the information searching behaviours of VFR hosts. Literature has demonstrated VFR travellers' higher reliance on the recommendations of friends and relative hosts regarding how they undertake their trips (Meis et al., 1995; Young et al., 2007). In addition, VFR hosts have been shown to recommend those attractions and activities that they are familiar with or visited before or perceived positively (Backer, 2008; Young et al., 2007). This research has similarly demonstrated that the attractions and activities that participant VFR hosts recommended were places (or activities) that the resident host had either visited (or undertaken), or at least had awareness of. For this reason, local residents need to be aware of their local attractions and activities so that they can fully utilise their respective destinations while making recommendations to their VFRs (Backer, 2008; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007).

Despite its importance, previous research has not examined the influence of various information sources encountered by VFR hosts to learn about the local attractions and

activities. This research has, therefore, provided valuable new insights regarding the information searching behaviours of VFR hosts. Such insights can be particularly helpful to tourism operators and DMOs.

#### **7.7.1 DIVERSE INFORMATION SOURCES**

The source of travel information has become very complicated because of the presence of many sources and increasing use of technology (Hyde, 2008; Kim et al., 2007; Molina & Esteban, 2006; Osti et al., 2008). VFR hosts are no exception and this research also revealed VFR hosts' use of diverse information sources. Besides personal experience, VFR hosts used a broad range of external sources, such as print and visual media; word of mouth; visitor information centres and the Internet.

#### **7.7.2 TRADITIONAL INFORMATION SOURCES**

This research has specifically highlighted the usefulness of traditional information sources for VFR hosts. According to the literature, cultural differences can influence the importance of various information sources (Osti et al., 2008). The findings from this study show that despite the cultural differences, immigrants and non-immigrant VFR hosts consistently utilised traditional information sources, such as television, brochure, newspaper and radio. The use of traditional information sources was similar for VFR hosts in both regional and metropolitan destinations. This finding signifies the importance of traditional information sources for communicating local attractions and activities, which in turn can influence the decisions and activities of VFR travellers.

The analysis of this study found that the measures for traditional information source importance demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability properties. However, this was not the case for social sources of information which included personal experience, WOM

and the Internet. Therefore, further analysis was limited to using the importance of traditional information source.

## **7.8 ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

The role of hosting VFRs has direct and indirect economic impacts on a local economy. VFR hosts make direct economic contributions to the local community through their wider spending on groceries, recreational shopping, dining out, beverages, visiting paid attractions and fuel in their hosting role (Backer, 2007; 2008; McKercher, 1995; Young et al. 2007). Immigrant hosts, in this study, reported spending more than the non-immigrant hosts. Moreover, VFR hosts in metropolitan areas contributed relatively more money to the local economy than the VFR hosts in regional destinations. Further, this research demonstrated that VFR hosts' spending was more diverse with their visiting relatives than with their friends.

VFR travellers participate in as diverse touristic activities as other travellers (e.g. recreational and business visitors), and often with their local residents VFR hosts involving the use of paid tourism facilities, services and local businesses (Backer, 2008; Liu & Ryan, 2011; McKercher, 1995; Shani & Uriely, 2012). This was confirmed in this study where immigrant VFR hosts participated more in diverse local touristic attractions and activities with their VFRs, especially with their relatives.

VFR travellers make recurrent visits to the same destination as they tend to visit the destination where their friend and relative hosts reside (Backer, 2010c; MacEachern, 2007). Repeat VFR travellers contribute more money through their diverse spending in destinations over a lifetime than one-time visitors. Consistent with existing literature (Backer et al., 2017; Seaton & Tagg, 1995), this research demonstrated that local resident VFR hosts were being visited more by their relatives as compared to their friends. This

research also demonstrated that non-immigrant VFR hosts had received more repeat visitors as they were mostly domestic visitors whereas immigrant hosts' VFRs visited them mostly from overseas.

VFR hosts contribute to the commercial accommodation industry through attracting a significant number of visitors in their destinations who stay in paid accommodation (Backer, 2010a; Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995). This research has suggested that VFR travellers' use of commercial accommodation is associated with VFR hosts' hosting capacity in their home. It follows that VFR hosts capacity (i.e. household and dwelling size) could be an important determinant that VFRs would select commercial accommodation, as indicated by the exiting research (Backer, 2010c).

## **7.9 SOCIAL IMPACTS**

Besides the economic impact, hosting VFRs also influences the experiences of VFR travellers. As indicated by the local resident hosts in this research, VFR travel provides visitors and hosts with an opportunity to maintain the personal relationships through face-to-face encounters. The face-to-face interaction is critical for people, to reaffirm and evolve relationships with those who are close (Boden & Molotch, 1991; Griffin, 2013a; Urry, 2002).

The presence of friends and relatives in visiting destinations provides visitors with a sense of home away from their own destination (Shani, 2013; Uriely, 2010). This is beneficial for VFRs who visit any new destination or international visitors who come to visit from different social and cultural settings, such as immigrant local residents' friends and relatives from overseas. Moreover, VFR hosts' recommendations to their VFRs based on their own experience and familiarity with the local areas helps VFRs take informed travel-related decisions and activities. VFR hosts also act as local tourist guides by accompanying their

VFRs in their travel activities and visiting of attractions. Further, it provides a means of visiting a destination in an affordable way, which can be particularly significant during the economic downturn (Asiedu, 2008; Backer, 2012b).

Hosting VFRs also provide a means for them to participate in irregular activities or visiting new attractions, which increases their involvement and awareness with their local destinations. This is particularly useful for the new immigrant hosts who seek to improve their familiarity and connections with their new communities.

## **7.10 SUMMARY DISCUSSION**

This research has increased understanding of the role of VFR hosts, making a significant contribution to knowledge, as this has been consistently identified as a significant research gap (Backer, 2007; Griffin, 2013a, 2013b; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). This study examined the hosting of friends versus relatives and considered whether and to what extent immigration and destination type impact on VFR travel activities and experiences for hosts. Therefore, the findings of this research have provided an understanding of the similarities and differences of immigrant versus non-immigrant VFR hosts.

The findings regarding the differences between hosting VFs and VRs generated new insights about the interactions between travellers visiting friends and relatives and their hosts. Moreover, this research has increased understanding of the differences of hosting friends versus hosting relatives.

The destination aspect of this research has helped increase understanding of the effect of destination attractiveness in VFR travel between metropolitan and regional destinations. The findings regarding destination attractiveness have provided insights into how local



residents in both metropolitan and regional areas can attract their friends and relatives to visit their destination through VFR travel.

Overall, the findings of this research concerned with migration, relationship and destination aspects of VFR travel have significantly added to scholarship. In addition, this information will provide valuable insights to inform industry marketing campaigns, which could improve visitor (and host) experiences as well as boost local economies, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## **7.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed the findings of each of the research objectives addressed through the quantitative and qualitative research of this study. In doing so, this chapter discussed how the role of VFR hosts varied in influencing VFRs' trip characteristics (such as frequency of visits, group size, duration of stay) connecting with the migration status and destination attributes of VFR hosts in addition to the relationship with VFRs.

This chapter also discussed how the resulting decisions and activities of VFR hosts (such as expenses and recommendations) and VFRs (such as choice of accommodation, travel activities and visting of attractions) is influenced by hosts' differences in immigration status, destination types and relationships with VFRs. Additionally, the differences in hosting experiences (positive and negative) and the influence of these experiences on hosting decisions and activities (such as recommendations, expenses, involvement) has been considered. How these findings reconfirmed or provide valuable new insights into the literature has also been discussed. The next chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the key theoretical contributions of this research and practical implications of the findings. The limitations of the study and future research direction provided by this study are also discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

This final chapter of the thesis, commences with a full summary of the research objectives that have been addressed (Section 8.1), followed by a summary discussion of the key findings (Sections 8.2). After that the chapter provides a summary of the key theoretical contributions of this research (Section 8.3), followed by a discussion of the practical implications of the findings of this research (Section 8.4). The limitations of the study are clarified in the next section (Section 8.5) following a discussion of future research avenues offered by this study (Section 8.6). This chapter ends with a conclusion to the thesis (Section 8.7).

### **8.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

This research investigated how the variation in characteristics of local resident VFR hosts influenced the role of hosts differently in VFR travel. More specifically, this research addressed the following seven research objectives:

1. To analyse the literature on VFR travel that is directly related to tourism in order to understand the themes and development within the extant literature.
2. To review the literature on hosts and guests interactions to understand the nature of interactions between VFR hosts and guests.
3. To examine the role of immigrant and non-immigrant VFR hosts to assess whether and to what extent the influence of hosts on VFR travel differ.

4. To examine whether and to what extent length of residency of hosts impacts upon VFR travel, and to compare and contrast whether migration impacts VFR travel.
5. To assess whether and to what extent destinations (i.e. metropolitan versus regional cities) can impact VFR travel hosting.
6. To compare and contrast the hosting of VFs and VRs in different destinations to assess whether and to what extent the characteristics, behaviours and use of local industries differ.
7. To examine the nature of the social interactions between hosts and their VFRs.

The first two research objectives involved a critical review of the extant VFR travel literature, which provided the theoretical basis of the study on which this research was developed. The third and fourth research objectives quantitatively examined the influence of migration on VFR hosting through the country of birth and span of migration (i.e. how long they have been migrated to their adopted country of residence) of VFR hosts respectively. The fifth research objective quantitatively compared the influence of destination attractiveness in the VFR hosting between regional and metropolitan areas. Research objective six quantitatively examined whether and how the relationship type influenced hosting. The final research objective of the study provided qualitative insights regarding the experience of VFR hosting. The next section provides a summary of the key findings that identified through the seven research objectives of this study.

### **8.3 KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Existing literature has indicated the paucity of research on VFR travel (Backer, 2007; Griffin, 2013a, 2013b; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). The literature review conducted in this study, based on the first two research objectives, identified that the earliest

VFR travel research, which commenced in the 1990s, focused on measurement and highlighted the need for further research. Much of the research throughout that decade demonstrated the underestimation of VFR travel numbers in the official statistics (e.g. Braunlich & Nadkarni, 1995; Meis et al., 1995; Morrison & O’Leary, 1995; Jackson, 1990).

Research in the 2000s focused on the economic and marketing issues for generating an improved understanding of VFR travel. VFR travel was also studied briefly through segmenting VFR travel into VFs and VRs, finding significant differences in the profiles and characteristics of the two groups (Hay, 2008; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007).

VFR travel research since 2010 has focused on the social aspects to build on the previous research related to economic and commercial aspects, and deepen understanding. In particular, the motivations, characteristics and behaviours of VFR travellers and hosts and the factors that influence their travel decisions and activities is a burgeoning area of research (Backer, 2010a, 2010c; 2012a; Griffin, 2013a; Shani & Uriely, 2012). The VFR travellers’ connection with migration demonstrates as one of the primary motivators of VFR travel’s demand and supply and travel decision and activities (Dwyer et al., 2014; Ying-xue et al., 2013). This research identified that although recent development of VFR travel research has provided an improved understanding regarding the large volume and commercial significance of VFR travel, it is still not a popular area of research in tourism, given the number of research outputs (146 publications from 1990 to 2017). In this connection, the re-examination of the issues raised by Backer (2007) regarding the lack of VFR travel research demonstrated that VFR travel research has made some significant advancement in recent times. However, issues such as discrepancy in the official VFR travel data; difficulty of measuring VFR travel; incorrect perception regarding the economic impact; limited discussion about VFR travel in tourism textbooks; perception

regarding the difficulty to influence VFR travellers, persist. Overall VFR travel is still not a popular area to research in comparison to other forms of travel such as recreational and business travel.

This study has particularly highlighted the lack of research on VFR hosts, recognising that the current development of VFR research has been mainly studying VFR travellers. Moreover, the relationship aspect of VFR travel between hosts and guests (i.e. the travellers) and its connection with migration identified as a critical area of study that requires further research.

This study conducted a national online resident survey among the local residents of Australia addressing Research Objectives Three through to Research Objective Six. Overall the findings of the quantitative research based on the analysis of 331 local resident VFR host participants has demonstrated how the variation in their characteristics: migration, destination types and relationship types, influenced their hosting of VFRs.

Regarding the influence of migration, this research demonstrated that non-immigrant VFR hosts are likely to receive more repeat visitation than immigrant hosts. However, this difference between immigrants and non-immigrant hosts regarding repeat visitation was mainly associated with the immigrants' duration of migration. There was no significant difference between the non-immigrant and immigrant hosts who had been in the country for more than ten years regarding the number of repeat visitation from VFRs. Moreover, immigrant VFR hosts tended to incur more expenses for hosting their VFRs than non-immigrants. This tendency was notably higher among the new immigrants who had been in the country for 1-10 years compared to immigrants who had been in Australia for more than 10 years.

In terms of the influence of destination types, this research demonstrated that the destinations that VFR hosts resided in could influence the group size and duration of stay of VFR travel parties. Such implications also affected the subsequent cost of hosting VFRs. VFR hosts in the metropolitan areas had smaller travel parties and shorter visits from their VFRs, compared to the hosts in the regional areas. Although there were no differences among the individual categories of expenses, hosts in the metropolitan areas spent more money on hosting their VFRs than the hosts in the regional areas.

This research further demonstrated that the nature of relationship between hosts and visitors could influence the duration of stay, number of repeat visits and decisions to stay with hosts. This research showed that friends stayed longer than relatives whereas relatives paid more repeat visits and were more inclined to stay with the hosts.

This research also addressed the social side of hosting VFRs through the final Research Objective. Thirty-four in-depth interviews were conducted with local resident VFR hosts in three contrasting destinations of Victoria, Australia: Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne. Differences were found between the experiences of hosting friends and hosting relatives, with immigration a key aspect impacting the outcome. The positive influence of the local destination on hosting VFRs was also demonstrated. From the hosting perspective, this research revealed that VFR hosts tend to host relatives more to maintain relationships whereas there was more of a recreational aspect to the hosting of their friends. Further, immigrant hosts were more motivated to become involved in VFR travel to reconnect with their homeland through hosting their friends and relatives who come to visit them from their country of origin. Non-immigrants were keen to reunite with their friends and relatives living away from them whom they do not get the chance to meet frequently.

Moreover, this research has demonstrated VFR hosts' tendency to use both traditional and social media information sources through which they come to know about the local attractions and activities. Despite the differences in their characteristics, VFR hosts used traditional travel information sources (such as television, brochure, newspaper and radio) to get to know about the local travel activities and attractions.

Overall this research has revealed a distinctiveness in hosting VFRs that has not been researched before. Notably, this research has recognised that there are different types of VFR hosts. In building on Backer's (2012a) definitional model of VFR travellers, this study has offered a definitional model of VFR hosts to showcase the different host types (see Figure. 2.3). Moreover, this research also confirms existing findings regarding the trip characteristics, decision and activities undertaking by VFR travellers from the hosting perspective. The next two sections discuss the key theoretical contributions and practical implications of these findings.

#### **8.4 KEY THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

The limited existing research on VFR hosts has considered how VFR hosts could play a significant role in influencing the occurrence and outcomes of VFR travel (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). VFR hosts attract their friends and relatives to come and visit their places and also provide recommendations regarding travel-related decisions and activities (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). In addition, VFR hosts incur additional expenses and often join their VFRs in their activities and visiting of attractions while hosting, which generates an added economic contribution on top of the contributions from VFRs to the visiting destination (Backer, 2010b; McKercher, 1995).

However, the multifaceted role of VFR hosts varies among different hosts groups such as local residents, international students, and second homeowners (Backer, 2008; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). For this reason, understanding the different attributes of VFR hosts is essential to understanding the extent and nature of VFR hosts' role in influencing trip characteristics, and VFR travellers' travel decision and activities (Backer, 2008; Shani & Uriely, 2012; Young et al., 2007). This research has compared contrasting groups of local resident VFR hosts linking with the three key components of VFR travel (migration; relationship status; destination-attractiveness), thereby making a significant contribution to knowledge. Prior to this study, previous VFR research had not examined these three key components of VFR travel (migration; relationship status; destination-attractiveness) in a single study from the hosting perspective. Thus, this research has primarily contributed to VFR scholarship in the three following ways:

#### **8.4.1 IMMIGRANTS VERSUS NON-IMMIGRANTS**

First, this research has contributed insights into the VFR literature regarding the connection between migration and VFR travel. Immigrant communities contribute to the local tourism flow through VFR travel via different immigrant communities (Bolognani, 2014; Kang & Page, 2000). This has been shown to be the case in various countries (Asiedu, 2008; Leitao & Shahbaz, 2012), including Australia (Dwyer, Seetaram, Forsyth, & King, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2014). However, prior to this research, it was not evident how the immigrant communities contribute to the local economy through hosting VFRs and whether or in what ways those immigrant hosts varied from the non-immigrant/local born hosts.

This research has demonstrated that immigrant VFR hosts' varied not only for the country of birth but also for their length of stay in Australia. Particularly, immigrants have their friends and relatives mostly visit them far from their country of origin, evoking a sense of



reconnection with their homeland through sharing common values and culture with their VFRs. The experience also provides VFR hosts with an opportunity to showcase their adopted lifestyle and culture in the new country through presenting diverse touristic activities.

Conversely, non-immigrant hosts tend to host friends and relatives from the same country, although those friends and relatives may reside great distances away given the size of Australia. Thus, hosting VFRs provides hosts with an opportunity to reunite with their friends and family, and to a less extent, presents them with an opportunity to showcase their region.

#### **8.4.2 HOSTING FRIENDS VERSUS HOSTING RELATIVES**

Second, this research has contributed theoretical insights relating to the differences between hosting friends and hosting relatives. Previous studies indicated motivational differences between VF and VR travellers through demonstrating differences in trip characteristics and travel activities (Backer et al., 2017; Gafter & Tchetchik, 2017; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Seaton & Tagg, 1995). However, this study has been the first to examine the motivational differences between hosting friends and hosting relatives.

This research has highlighted that VFR hosts felt more affinity with their relatives than with their friends, influencing the level of involvement and activities in hosting VFRs. Consequently, VFR hosts received more repeat visitation from their relatives and in return VFR hosts had hosted more relatives at home. Hosts of relatives also reported spending more time doing in-house activities and also reported that hosting relatives resulted in incurring more expenses compared to hosting friends.

In contrast, VFR hosts shared more common interests with their friends than with their relatives. This tended to result in hosts of friends undertaking a greater volume of outdoor

and touristic activities. However, hosts of friends also reported that the relationship felt more ‘formal’, and as a result, they felt that more effort was involved in order to try to impress them.

#### **8.4.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESTINATION AND VFR TRAVEL**

Third, this research has provided evidence regarding the relationship between destination attractiveness and VFR travel. Previous research showed the influence of destination on VFR travel through demonstrating differences in VFR travellers’ trip characteristics, willingness to visit and activities (Backer, 2008, 2011a; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007; Mckercher, 1995). However, this is the first study that examined differences in the influence of destination on VFR travel through demonstrating differences in hosting VFRs between metropolitan and regional destinations.

Hosting VFRs in regional areas differed from hosting in a metropolitan area through hosting more travel parties with a VFR travel purpose, as well as hosting larger travel parties. VFR hosts in regional areas were more likely to host travel parties that included children, and the VFRs tended to stay for longer durations. Conversely, VFR hosts in the metropolitan area incurred a higher total cost of hosting, and their VFRs were more likely to cite a non-VFR (e.g. leisure) purpose of visit. However, VFR hosts in the metropolitan area and regional areas equally showed loyalty towards their destinations through recommending local attractions and activities to their VFRs.

In addition to the three significant contributions to knowledge identified above, this research has also provided valuable insights regarding the information searching behaviours of VFR hosts. Previous literature indicated that VFR hosts tend to recommend those places and activities that they are familiar with and have positive perceptions of (Backer, 2008; McKercher, 1995; Slater, 2002; Young et al., 2007). Despite the importance,

just one of those earlier studies examined how VFR hosts become aware of those travel attractions and activities, which demonstrated VFR hosts' reliance on diverse information sources.

This research also revealed VFR hosts' use of diverse information sources demonstrating that VFR hosts received their travel-related information from both traditional (such as television, brochure, newspaper and radio) and social information (such as personal experience, word-of-mouth and the Internet) sources. Accordingly, this research has demonstrated the wider use of traditional information sources by VFR hosts, which was found to be consistent across all the VFR hosts groups considered in this study.

Moreover, this research demonstrated the key motivators that influence the nature of social interactions between VFR hosts and travellers. People's social interaction with others vary as a result of different motivation, role in the interactions, difficulties or challenges in the interactions and level of involvement in the interactions (Argyle et al., 1981; Gahagan, 1984; Murphy, 2001)

## **8.5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This research has practical implications for both DMOs and tourism operators. Previous research has indicated that VFR hosts should be targeted for influencing VFR travellers (Backer, 2011a; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995). This research has confirmed those findings but further confirmed research from Griffin (2015) that immigrant hosts are a potential source for attracting a new source of tourists into local destinations through hosting VFR travellers. Of note, this research has indicated that immigrant hosts are likely to attract international visitors irrespective of destination type (such as regional and metropolitan). This is particularly relevant for DMOs and tourism operators in destinations that are not regarded as popular tourism destinations. VFR travel is therefore potentially critically

important to destinations in which new visitor flows are challenging as immigrant hosts can result in attracting a flow of international visitors who are unlikely to visit that destination otherwise. Thus, there are multiple and ongoing benefits for communities in attracting a multicultural residential base.

Because of the connection from immigrant communities with international travel flows, as indicated by this research, national tourism authorities (such as Tourism Australia) could undertake a joint international VFR marketing initiative with the international airline service providers targeting the immigrant communities. Backer and Hay (2015) provide a good example of an international VFR travel marketing campaign in their study; the ‘Visit Soon’ campaign, a joint international initiative by the Tourism Australia and British Airways that was very successful in generating international VFR traffic in Australia. Given that UK-born residents constitute one of the largest proportions of the immigrant population in Australia, the ‘Visit Soon’ campaign was developed to prompt UK residents to visit their friends and relatives who resided in Australia. The core of the campaign was to use the emotional connection of the Diasporas with their home country. British Airways in partnership with other regional airlines offered reduced promotional fares and packages to attract VFR travellers to Australia.

Besides the international VFR marketing strategy ‘Visit Soon’, Backer and Hay (2015) also discussed V/Line train’s ‘Guilt Trip’ campaign targeting the domestic VFR travel market in partnership with the Victorian State Government. The ‘Guilt Trip’ campaign was implemented to attract people living in metropolitan areas of Victoria to visit their friends and families in the country or regional areas of Victoria and vice versa. The campaign was developed to use spare capacity in off-peak V/line train hours to encourage commuters to visit in a reduced off-peak fares. To do so, the campaign used series of radio, print, outdoor

and online advertising and promotional initiatives to reach the targeted VFR travel groups in both regional and metropolitan areas of Victoria, Australia. Thus these real life campaigns can be taken as practical guidelines for development and implementation of successful VFR travel marketing campaigns.

The immigrant VFR hosts in this study were found to participate in a wide range of touristic activities for the purpose of providing a positive image about themselves and their local areas to their friends and families visiting from overseas. In doing so, immigrants also became involved in local activities, which created a stronger connection with their local area and also injected funds into their local economy. Such behaviour may result in those local residents engaging in those local things again (e.g. dining out at the restaurant they took their VFs/VRs to). As such, DMOs and tourism operators may find benefits in undertaking proactive marketing campaigns directed at motivating immigrant local residents to engage actively as VFR hosts and identifying places to visit and upcoming events to assist in directing VFR activity. DMOs and tourism operators should consider both traditional and social information channels based on their accessibility and affordability for promoting their local marketing campaign targeting the diverse groups of local residents.

## **8.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although this research adopts a holistic approach, it has not established generalisability of the findings beyond the context of the study. Particularly, this research defined immigrant community broadly based on whether they were born in Australia or not. However, immigrant communities represent different subcultures or nationality, and they may have different hosting patterns from each other, which was not the focus of this study. Thus, this research has produced a set of findings related to VFR hosting behaviours and activities of

immigrant communities that have made a significant contribution to the current body of knowledge.

Moreover, this research only analysed nine information sources used by the participant VFR hosts. Other information sources such as social sources like Facebook, travel review and blogs, could have provided a more in-depth understanding in this regard. However, this research has provided a good understanding of the use of varied information sources by local residents informing them about the local travel attractions and activities, which was a key focus of the study.

## **8.7 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This research has indicated significant directions for future researchers, interested in examining VFR hosts. Especially, the VFR Hosts Definitional Model offered by this study can be used in future VFR research that seeks to define and categorise VFR hosts holistically. The VFR Hosts Definitional Model can also be used as a conceptual model for examining the differences in trip characteristics, decisions and activities of VFR travellers and hosts. Particularly, it would be valuable to see whether and how the hosting of VFR travellers differs among different VFR hosts groups (i.e. PVFR hosts, CVFR hosts and EVFR hosts) based on the VFR Hosts Definitional Model.

This research also indicates an important direction for future VFR studies that quantitatively examine immigrant communities. As the travel behaviours of immigrants vary at different points in time of their migration, future research should include the duration of stay of immigrants in their new countries in the analysis together with other demographic characteristics for more complete understanding. Such research would enhance our understanding of the variability of travel behaviours by immigrants that occurs over time.

This research has provided a basis for future research on information searching behaviours of VFR hosts, demonstrating the different internal and external information sources used by VFR hosts. A further larger study on the external information sources, such as print, visual and the Internet through which DMOs and local tourism organisations promote and inform local travel activities and attractions would be valuable to scholarship.

This research has also provided a systematic framework for examining the multifaceted role of VFR hosts through considering both the economic and social aspect of hosting. The generalisability of the estimation models developed and tested in this study can be replicated and adapted in future studies. The qualitative findings of this study regarding the experience of hosting can also be taken as a theoretical basis for developing hypotheses in future quantitative studies.

## **8.8 CONCLUSION**

This final chapter of the thesis has summarised the contribution of this study on the existing VFR travel literature. How DMOs and tourism organisations can benefit from the findings of this study was also discussed. The limitation of this study has been acknowledged. The final section of this chapter, which is the final chapter in this thesis, outlined a number of key research directions for future VFR research.

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## APPENDIX 1: RESIDENTS' SURVEY

**Q1:** How long have you been living in Australia?

- ☐ 1-5 years      ☐ 6-10 years  
☐ 11-15 years      ☐ 16+ years  
☐ Born in Australia

**Q2:** What state or territory do you reside?

- ☐ ACT ☐ NSW ☐ NT ☐ QLD ☐ SA ☐ TAS  
☐ VIC ☐ WA

**Q3:** What is the postcode for your current place of residence? (Insert number)

.....

**Q4:** Please state how long you have lived in your current town/city?

- ☐ Less than 12 months ☐ 1-5 years  
☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16+ years

**Q5:** What type of accommodation are you currently living in?

- ☐ House ☐ Unit ☐ Other (please specify)

.....

**Q6:** How many bedrooms does your current home offer? (Insert number)

.....

**Q7:** How many family members (including yourself) live in your home? (Insert number)

.....

**Q8:** In the past 12 months have you had any friends and/or relatives from another region (either overseas or at least 40 kilometres away for domestic visitors) come to visit you and stay at least one night in your region?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Q9:** Please specify what local activities and attractions you would recommend to your visiting friends and relatives?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Q10:** Please indicate which of the activities and attractions you mentioned from the previous question (question 9) you have been to?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Q11:** How many different travel parties (e.g. a family of one couple plus one child is one travel party with three people in it) of friends and relatives visited you in the past 12 months who stayed **at least one night with you**? (Insert number of different travel parties, even it was zero)

a) Friends: .....

b) Relatives: .....



☐ Visiting you/Your family /Family event

☐ Holiday/Pleasure

☐ Business/Professional

☐ Others

.....

☐ Visiting you/Your family /Family event

☐ Holiday/Pleasure

☐ Business/Professional

☐ Others

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- a. Groceries: \$.....
- b. Recreational Shopping: \$.....
- c. Restaurants/Cafes: \$.....
- d. Liquor: \$.....
- d. Fuel: \$.....

parks, zoo, and museums): \$.....

If others or more (Please Specify)

---

[illegible]

## No. of Adults.....

No. of Children.....

☐ January ☐ February ☐ March ☐ April  
☐ May ☐ June ☐ July ☐ August  
☐ September ☐ October ☐ November  
☐ December



**QIII:** Have they visited you previously?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐

**If Yes,** how many times did they visit previously (over life time)?

..... (Insert number)

**QIV:** Did your visitor(s) stay in your home, commercial accommodation, or elsewhere (tick any that apply) in your town/city?

☐ Your home

☐ Commercial accommodation (e.g. Hotel, motel, and apartment)

☐ Elsewhere (e.g. someone else's home)

**QV:** How many nights did your visitor(s) stay?

Nights..... (Insert number)

**QVI:** From which region did your visitor(s) come from?

☐ ACT ☐ NSW ☐ NT ☐ QLD ☐ SA ☐ Tas

☐ Vic ☐ WA

☐ Overseas..... (Insert country)

**QVII:** How did your visitor(s) travel from their place?

☐ Flew by Airplane ☐ Drove ☐ By Bus

☐ By train

If other (Please specify)

.....

**QVIII:** What was your visitor's (s') purpose of visit? (Select as many as apply)

☐ Visiting you/Your family /Family event

☐ Holiday/Pleasure

☐ Business/Professional

☐ Others

If others or more (Please Specify)

.....

**QIX:** What was your visitor's (s') *main* purpose ('s) of visit? (Select only *one*)

☐ Visiting you/Your family /Family event

☐ Holiday/Pleasure

☐ Business/Professional

☐ Others

If others or more (Please Specify)

.....

**QX:** Please state what type of activities and attractions your visitors did? (For example: shopping; dine out; cinema; visiting theme parks; public parks; sightseeing; go to the beach, cultural events; sports events etc.)

.....

.....

**QXI:** Please specify what activities and attractions you attended with your visitors?

.....

.....

a. Groceries: \$.....

b. Recreational Shopping: \$.....

c. Restaurants/Cafes: \$.....

d. Liquor: \$.....

d. Fuel: \$.....

e. Visiting paid attractions (e.g. Theme parks, zoo, and museums): \$.....

f. Entertainment (e.g. Cinema, sports, and cultural show): \$.....

If others or more (Please Specify)

.....

Q16. How do you consider the importance of the following information sources for obtaining information about local activities and attractions?

- Television

- Radio

- Newspaper

- Brochure

- Internet

- Information centre

- ☐
- Others (Please specify)

## **APPENDIX 2: PLAIN LANGUAGE INFORMATION STATEMENT OF THE ONLINE SURVEY**

Dear Participant,

This PhD study project is titled: “Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts” and is being undertaken by Mr. Mohammad Yousuf under the supervision of Associate Professor Elisa Backer and Dr. Mary Hollick through Federation Business School at Federation University, Australia. The purpose of the study is to identify how local residents interact with their Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travellers. We are inviting you to participate in this project through sharing your experiences, and are issuing this invitation through ResearchNow.

The survey will take around 10-15 minutes and your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time. Once you select ‘submit’ button at the end of the survey, from that point it will not be possible to withdraw consent to participate. Your confidentiality will be preserved in all processes and writing connected to this research. Once analysed, the data will be stored and remain on a secure database at the Federation Business School, Federation University Australia. All records will remain confidential and no personal information, which could lead to identification of any individual will be required. Access to the records will be limited to the researchers

If you decide to participate, the survey will ask you a series of questions about your interactions and activities with friends and/or relatives from outside the region who have visited you recently. Specifically, we are interested to know about your interactions and activities with your friends/relatives who either stayed with you or in commercial accommodation (eg hotel, motel, apartment, caravan park) during their visit. There is no right or wrong answer to any question. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the study at any time during the survey if you decide during the process that you’d prefer not to continue.

This project has been approved by the Federation University Australia’s Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is: A15-087. Should you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Ethics Officer (contact

information provided below). In the event you feel any distress, Lifeline Counsellors have a 24-hour telephone crisis support service, and they can be contacted on 13 11 14.

If you are willing to participate in this research project, please select the ‘starting the survey’ button below. By clicking the ‘Next’ button you are also indicating that you have read and understood the information provided above and consenting to participating in this study. Alternatively, if you do not want to participate, you can close this window in your browser to exit.

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled “***Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts***”, please contact the Principal Researcher, ***Associate Professor Elisa Backer*** of the Federation Business School ; **PH:** (03) 5327 9645; **EMAIL:** [e.backer@federation.edu.au](mailto:e.backer@federation.edu.au)

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Federation University Ethics Officers, Research Services, Federation University Australia,  
P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353 or Northways Rd, Churchill Vic 3842.  
Telephone: (03) 5327 9765, (03) 5122 6446 Email:  
[research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)  
CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

*starting the survey*

## APPENDIX 3: PLAIN LANGUAGE INFORMATION STATEMENT OF THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

### FEDERATION BUSINESS SCHOOL (BALLARAT)

<b>Project Title:</b>	Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts
<b>Principal Researcher:</b>	Associate Professor Elisa Backer
<b>Other/Student Researchers:</b>	Dr Mary Hollick and Mr Mohammad Yousuf

A PhD study project titled: “*Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts*” is being undertaken by Mr Mohammad Yousuf under the supervision of Associate Professor Elisa Backer and Dr Mary Hollick through Federation Business School at Federation University, Australia.

The purpose of the study is to identify how local residents interact with their Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travellers. We are inviting local residents of the Ballarat/Geelong/Inner and Outer Melbourne (18 years of age or over) to participate in this project through sharing their experiences.

The interview will take around 30 minutes (more or less based on the conversation), where participants will be asked a series of questions over the *telephone* about their interactions and activities with their friends and/or relatives who either stayed with them or in commercial accommodation (eg. hotel, motel, apartment, caravan park) during their visit. Participation is entirely voluntary and verbal consent will be taken before starting interview questions. The confidentiality of the participants will be preserved in all processes and writing connected to this research. Once analysed, the data will be stored and on a secure database at the Federation Business School, Federation University Australia. All records containing personal information will remain confidential and no information, which could lead to identification of any individual will be released. Access to the records will be limited to the researchers.

The research team is interested in hearing from the local residents on their experiences. Interested participants are requested to contact the PhD student researcher, Mohammad, on phone number (03) 5327 6112 or email [m.yousuf@federation.edu.au](mailto:m.yousuf@federation.edu.au). For more questions before deciding whether to participate or not, participants are more than welcome to contact

either Mohammad or his Principal Supervisor, Associate Professor Elisa Backer (contact details provided below).

This project has been approved by the Federation University Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee. The approval number is: **A15-087**. Should anyone have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project can contact the Ethics Officer (contact information provided below). In the event anyone feel any distress, Lifeline Counsellors have a 24-hour telephone crisis support service, and they can be contacted on **13 11 14**.

If you have any questions, or you would like further information regarding the project titled "*Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts*", please contact the Principal Researcher, *Associate Professor Elisa Backer* of the Federation Business School ; **PH:** (03) 5327 9645; **EMAIL:** [e.backer@federation.edu.au](mailto:e.backer@federation.edu.au)

Should you (i.e. the participant) have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact the Federation University Ethics Officers, Research Services, Federation University Australia,  
P O Box 663 Mt Helen Vic 3353 or Northways Rd, Churchill Vic 3842.  
Telephone: (03) 5327 9765, (03) 5122 6446 Email:  
[research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)  
CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

## **APPENDIX 4: LOCAL RESIDENTS' INTERVIEW PROMPT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Research Objective:** To examine the nature of the social interactions between hosts and their VFRs.

- (i) How long have you been living in Australia?**
- (ii) Thinking about the people who have visited you over the past 12 months, can you tell me some details about their trips, where they stay, why they visited and how long they stayed?**
  - *Probe for type of visitors (friends and relatives).*
  - *Probe for proportion of friends and relatives visitors.*
  - *Probe for group size of the visitors*
  - *Probe for visitors' choice of accommodation*
  - *Probe for duration of stay of the visitors*
  - *Probe for generating regions of the visitors (if respondent was not born in Australia then ask if any visitors were from previous homeland)*
  - *Probe for frequency of visit of the visitors*
  - *Probe for transit route of the visitors*
  - *Probe for visitor's purpose of visit*
- (iii) Thinking about some of the visitors who you have hosted in the past 12 months, can you outline how you are connected? (if friends, how did you become friends; if relatives, how you are related)**
- (iv) How important to you is it, that you receive visitors (friends/relatives)?**

**(v) What things do you usually do with your visitors? Do you do different things with friends compared to relatives? Explain.**

- *Identify travel activities such as sight-seeing*
- *Identify local travel attractions they visit*
- *Identify the level of use of industries including dining out, shopping*

**(vi) In your opinion, how well suited is your local area in terms of offering a wide range of interesting things to do and see with your visitors?**

- *Identify the level of familiarity with the local areas*
- *Identify perception towards local areas*

**I am now going to ask you a series of questions that relates to the most recent visit you have had.**

**(i) Thinking about the most recent visitor/s who you have hosted, can you outline how you are connected?** (are they friends or relatives; if friends, how did you become friends; if relatives, how you are related)

**(ii) In terms of the most recent visit you have had, can you describe your expectations in advance of their visit?**

**(iii) What was the most memorable aspect of their visit?**

**(iv) Did you assist them in any way with their visit (eg advice on transit route, arranging any part of their travel, activities during their stay)?**



- (v) **Did the visit re-establish your connection with the person/people who visited you (explain)?** *(did it strengthen your cultural/social ties with the person/people)*
- (vi) **Did that most recent visit result in any friction or misunderstanding or difficulties? If so, what were those difficulties?**
- (vii) **Did they bring any gifts with them or buy any during their stay? If so what were those?**
- (viii) **Do you think you will visit those most recent visitors soon (if so, when do you think that may be)?**

## APPENDIX 5: HREC APPROVAL

### Amendment Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee



Principal Researcher:	A/P Elisa Backer
Other/Student Researcher/s:	Dr Mary Hollick Mr Mohammad Yousuf
School/Section:	The Business School
Project Number:	A15-087
Project Title:	Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel in Australia: An Examination of the Role of VFR Hosts.
For the period:	26/08/2015 to 27/05/2017

*Quote the Project No. A15-087 in all correspondence regarding this application.*

Amendment Detail: Use of media release to generate additional potential respondents to participate in this study.

**Please note:** Ethics Approval is contingent upon the submission of a **Final Project Report** upon the completion/discontinuation of the project. **Annual Project Reports** must also be submitted if the duration of the project exceeds twelve months. It is the responsibility of researchers to make a note of the following dates and submit these reports in a timely manner, as reminders may not be sent out. Failure to submit reports will result in your ethics approval lapsing.

#### **REPORTS TO HREC:**

An annual report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:  
**2 June 2016**

A final report for this project must be submitted to the Ethics Officer on:  
**27 June 2017**

These report forms can be found at:

<http://federation.edu.au/research-and-innovation/research-support/ethics/human-ethics/human-ethics3>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irene Hall".

Irene Hall  
**Ethics Officer**  
26 August 2015

## APPENDIX- 6: PUBLICATION SYNOPSISES

Year of Publication	Journal/ Conference	Title	Synopsis	ABDC Rank
2017	<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	Hosting Friends versus Hosting Relatives: Is Blood Thicker Than Water?	<i>Little research has been undertaken to examine visiting friends and relatives (VFR) travel from the perspective of hosts. Additionally, little research has explored the differences between VFs and VRs, treating VFR as one homogenous group. This research examined the hosts' perspective of hosting friends versus relatives through in-depth interviews with 34 local residents in three contrasting destinations in Australia. Key differences were found between the experiences of hosting friends versus relatives, with immigration a key aspect in impacting the outcome. This is the first study to examine hosting friends versus relatives and to consider how immigration and destination impact VFR travel experiences for hosts</i>	<b>A</b>
2015a	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	A Content Analysis of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel Research.	<i>Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel is a significant form of tourism worldwide. Scholarly research into VFR commenced in 1990 and since then only one review of the literature has been conducted, which was a content analysis based exclusively on journal articles. That research, based from 1990 to 2010 highlighted that only 39 VFR articles had been published in tourism journals. Given the small number of publications identified, it was felt that an analysis encompassing a wider selection of publication forums and extended to 2015 would be valuable to scholarship. This research also considered citations and outputs by individual authors to determine where research is being</i>	<b>B</b>

			<p><i>derived from. The findings of this research identified recent growth in VFR travel research from wider publication forums, including conference papers and theses. However, VFR has made the most presence through book chapters in recent years. VFR research has historically focused on the commercial and marketing aspects, but more recently has turned to furthering understanding of the social aspects by giving particular importance to the VFR hosts and migration topics for the future direction of VFR research.</i></p>	
2015b	<p><i>Council for Australasian University Tourism and Hospitality Education Conference, Southern Cross University Gold Coast, Australia: CAUTHE</i></p>	<p>The Evolution of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) Travel Research: A Content Analysis.</p>	<p><i>Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel is a significant form of tourism worldwide. Scholarly research into VFR commenced in 1990 and since then only one review of the literature has been conducted, which was a content analysis based exclusively on journal articles. That research, based from 1990-2010 highlighted that only 39 VFR articles had been published in tourism journals. Given the small number of publications identified, it was felt that an analysis encompassing a wider selection of publication forums would be valuable to scholarship. This research has undertaken a content analysis extending to 2014 that includes conference papers, book chapters and theses as well as tourism journal articles. The findings identified a growth in VFR travel conference papers and theses, but VFR has had little presence through book chapters. VFR research has historically focused on the commercial aspects, but more recently has turned to furthering understanding of the social aspects</i></p>	<p><b>International Conference</b></p> <p><b>(This paper won the PhD bursary award at the 2015 CAUTHE Conference)</b></p>